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[“IT’S A JOYFUL SIGHT TO SEE YOU BACK, SIR PIERCE,” EXCLAIMED THE OLD MAN, GLEEFULLY.]

## MARAQUITA.

### CHAPTER II.

“I’m afraid you find life here rather quiet, my dear,” said Lady Lyngard, one morning, about three weeks later, as she sat in her boudoir with her young companion. “You hardly calculated on such an utterly monotonous existence, did you?”

“It is an existence I would not change for any other!” was Maraquita’s quick response. “I do not care for excitement—I hate the very sound of the word!”

Lady Lyngard looked at her a little curiously—sentences like these sometimes set her wondering, and speculating on what Miss Leigh’s former experiences could have been; but the girl never spoke of them in any direct form, and she was herself too true a gentlewoman, both my instinct and breeding, to attempt to force a confidence not voluntarily given.

Maraquita would have been very happy in her new life at Lyngard Court but for one

thing—the terror of living under a false name, and the fear lest her whereabouts should be discovered by her father, and she should be forced to return to him—for she knew very little of the law, and imagined he had the right to compel her to remain under his roof until she reached the age of twenty-one. Otherwise she would have been utterly content.

She was treated with the greatest kindness by Lady Lyngard. Avise Foley had conceived for her a violent fancy, which resulted in a sincere friendship between the two girls. The days went by in a placid calm, that contrasted with the turbulent unrest of her Parisian experiences—seemed in itself bliss; and her duties were so light that she had ample time to devote to reading, or whatever other amusement she might choose. What more was there left to wish for?

In her heart she rather dreaded the return of the master of the house, who, in some inexplicable manner, she was inclined to dislike—perhaps because she fancied when he did come her own liberty and freedom of action would be considerably curtailed, and the quiet, do-

mestic life she had led with Lady Lyngard put an end to for ever. Not so Lady Lyngard herself, whose one trouble was her nephew’s continued absence.

“I’m rather afraid he never will settle down,” she said, pursuing her own train of thought. “For the last ten years he has been travelling about like a wandering Jew, and when men have grown accustomed to such a nomadic existence they seldom change it.”

“But what made him take to it?” asked Maraquita.

“A great sorrow!” Lady Lyngard answered; but she did not say what it was, and presently the young girl left her, and went downstairs to the conservatory for the purpose of gathering flowers, it being one of her tasks to fill the vases.

As she came back she paused in the hall, and stood looking out on the January sunlight flooding the park with its pale glory, and shining down on the crocuses and snowdrops—those first-born children of the young year, that were blossoming out their fragile lives in the stone vases on the terrace. The grave, young companion’s face relaxed, and a smile of ex-

quisite thankfulness curved her lips as she thought of in what pleasant places her lines had fallen. Oh! if it would only continue, this most welcome repose!

"I actually know what happiness is once again!" she said to herself, unconscious of how lovely she looked, standing there with the dark carving of the door enfaming her, and the basket of flowers she held in her hand lending the vivid scarlet camellia and japonica to a picture that was, in every attribute, perfect.

Suddenly she started violently, and took a pace backwards.

Coming up the marble steps of the terrace was a tall man, with dark, eager eyes, that she instantly recognized—none other, in fact, than the one at the sight of whom Paul Chevasse had manifested such terror on Christmas Eve, and who he had afterwards followed.

She made a great effort to recover her self-possession, and succeeded; but not before he had noticed the effect his presence had produced on her, and wondered at it as a thing for which he could in no wise account.

Raising his hat in acknowledgment of her presence he paused in front of the door, and she, by some process of intuitive reasoning, concluded he must be a stranger come to look over the house—Sir Lyngard Court was the show place of the neighbourhood, and people flocked from miles round for the sake of its antique carving and gallery of old masters.

"Did you wish to see the pictures?" she asked, and a faint smile dawned on his lips at the question.

"If you will be good enough to show them to me," he answered, coming in, and glancing round the wide, lofty hall, with its skins of animals mounted on scarlet cloth, and the various trophies of the chase, adorning the walls.

Maraquita hesitated a moment. There was no servant visible to whom she could yield the guidance of the visitor, and it would hardly do to leave him while she went in search of one, so the only way of easing the difficulty was to act as cicerone herself. This she accordingly did, leading the way upstairs, and pointing out as she went the various objects of interest—for already she had made herself thoroughly acquainted with the interior of the house, and knew as much of its contents as the housekeeper herself.

The gentleman did not seem in any way struck by what he saw, and shrugged his shoulders half cynically as he stood in front of a picture that was supposed to be a genuine Marillo and the gem of the collection.

"The owner of this place is away, is he not?" he said, turning to her, where she stood in front of a stained-glass window, whose jewelled colours fell upon her in a cloud of misty, sunflecked glory. "Pity Fortune should have made him master of what he so little appreciates. Don't you think so?"

"It is not my province to pronounce judgment on Sir Piers Lyngard!" he answered, a little stiffly. "Doubtless he knows his own affairs best, and is more capable of forming an opinion than a stranger would be!"

"I accept the rebuke," he said, putting up his hand to stroke his moustache. "I was only repeating what people might say. Perhaps Sir Piers has a valid reason for absenting himself."

"Perhaps."

"Do you know if this is so?" he went on, apparently unmindful of the annoyed colour his persistency had called to her cheeks.

"I do not; and if I did I certainly should not be any the more inclined to satisfy idle curiosity!" she answered, sharply, and led the way downstairs, wondering all the while what could have taken place between him and her father to exercise on the latter so powerful an effect as she had witnessed.

"I suppose you mean me to go now?" he said, pausing in the hall, and smiling in a peculiar manner. "Well, I thank you for our kindness in conducting me through the

house. I assure you I have viewed it under quite a novel aspect, and certainly never saw so many beauties to admire before."

Maraquita started—struck by a sudden idea, that, although she dismissed it as absurd, was yet sufficient to make her feel hot and uncomfortable.

"Then this is not your first visit?" she faltered.

"By no means! I have been here many times, as I daresay, Benson will testify"—turning to the old butler, who was just crossing the hall, and who paused, transfixed with astonishment. "He will also tell you who I am, and save me the embarrassment of mentioning my own name."

He was laughing now, apparently enjoying her mystification, while the butler came forward, gleefully rubbing his withered hands together and bowing.

"It is a joyful surprise to see you back again, Sir Piers—a sight good for old eyes!" he exclaimed, in tones that quivered a little. "Have you come to stay with us at last, sir?"

"For a time, at any rate, Benson," replied his master, shaking hands with him; then, turning to Maraquita, who was scarlet with ashamed vexation, he continued, in a lower tone, "Are you angry with me—do you think I have taken an unfair advantage over you?"

"Yes," she answered, truthfully, with no effort to disguise her resentment.

"I am very sorry. I will make all apologies you may demand!" coming a step nearer, and speaking very eagerly. "I suppose I ought not to have kept you in ignorance of who I was, but I really could not resist the temptation. Won't you forgive me?" entreatingly.

"As I told you before, I have no right to dictate your conduct, Sir Piers," she said, coldly, and moving away.

"Then you have no right to withhold absolution for a sin confessed," he added, following. "It is impossible for you to judge of how strong the temptation was, otherwise you would be less hard-hearted. You won't be friends?" as he held out his hand, which she pretended not to see. "Well, I must leave it to time to obtain my pardon, since you are so obdurate!"

### CHAPTER III.

"I THINK," said Miss Avie Foley to herself, as she stood in front of her looking-glass, and contemplated with much satisfaction the image it gave back; "I think I shall do."

After this candid expression of opinion she slipped lightly downstairs into the dressing-room, where her mother, a handsome, dark-eyed woman, with a stately manner that could on occasion become extremely haughty, was sitting in front of the fire, screening her face from the flame with a fan of peacock feathers.

"Six o'clock," said Avie, kneeling down beside her, and glancing at the timepiece.

"Lady Lyngard and May will be here directly, I should think."

"May!" repeated her mother, in some displeasure. "How extremely familiar you have become with that young person. Avie, it is really hardly discreet of you."

"Wait until you've seen her, mamma, and then if you manage to resist her charm, and fail to love her, you are—well, harder-hearted than the generality of people. You can't think how delighted I am to have found such a friend!"

"I fancy my pet has rather a liking for new faces!" said Mrs. Foley, bending down to kiss her. "See how highly you have grown to think of Dr. Lascelles!"

There was something the matter with Avie's shoe—a buckle that required to be tightened, and perhaps it was the exertion of doing it that brought such a vivid red to her cheeks as she looked up again.

"Dr. Lascelles is no cleverer—you know you think so yourself!" she said, rather apologetically.

"Most decidedly he is cleverer, or I should never have allowed him to attend to that

wound on your neck, which he has treated very successfully. However, now that it is all right there is no necessity for him to continue his visits, and after to-night I do not think he had better come again."

Avie was silent for awhile, and gazed thoughtfully into the glow of the fire, as if she might there find a clue to the problems perplexing her.

It was now nearly a month since that evening when she had first met Dr. Lascelles, and in the interval she had seen him nearly every day—not purposely, excepting, indeed, when he called at the Manor in his capacity of physician, but often in her walks in the village, whither she went two or three afternoons a week, carrying a basket filled with good things for the old women, and looking like a modern Santa Claus, dressed up in nineteenth century costume. On these occasions it had seemed the most natural thing in the world for him to relieve her of her basket, and accompany her to the gates of her home, as his own lay in the same direction; and speedily an intimacy sprang up between them, and they spoke to each other with the candour and unreserve of people whose interests are identical. He told her of the book he was writing which was to make him famous, and confer lasting benefit on the medical profession, and she, listening, thought him cleverer than he was, and looked up at him with a world of admiration in her tender blue eyes—eyes that were, in good truth, sweet enough to glaze away any man's heart.

She was always sympathetic, always ready with encouragement, innocent hopes of the future, and prophecies of all that was to be achieved in it; and gradually some of her enthusiasm communicated itself to him, and the weary look of spent energy that had formerly saddened his face gave place to the eagerness of a man who, seeing before him some great object in life, struts every nerve in order to attain it.

Avie had not invariably mentioned these rencontres to her mother. She did not wish to be deceitful, but some instinct warned her that Mrs. Foley would have been far from pleased at the knowledge—would, perhaps, have forbidden her to go into the village at all; and then—how lonely it would be for the young doctor, who had positively no one, save herself, to talk to, and obtain sympathy from.

It will be seen that Avie's sophistry, in this instance, took the same bent as her insinuations.

"You know Sir Piers has returned?" said Mrs. Foley, bending in on her meditations, from which she only roused herself with an effort.

"Yes! Is he coming here to-night?"

"I believe so—I hope so!" her mother responded, thinking to herself that fortune had been kind in sending the baronet back at this opportune moment, just when Avie was looking her brightest and best—for it had been a dream of hers these three years past to see her daughter mistress of Lyngard Court; and surely she was fair and winsome enough to gain its master's heart!

"Dr. Lascelles!" announced a footman, in stentorian tones, throwing the door open to admit the new tenant of the "Wilderness," who looked singularly handsome in his evening dress—so, at least, Avie thought. Immediately afterwards the party from Lyngard Court entered, Maraquita standing behind Lady Lyngard with the sort of proud humanity her manner usually exhibited when outside the immediate home circle; for she was keenly alive to the anomaly of her position, and ultra-sensitive lest she might be suspected of attempting to presume upon it.

"Mamma, I am so glad you and May will know each other at last!" exclaimed Avie, drawing the young girl forward; and Mrs. Foley, looking up, saw before her a tall, slim figure, clad in a cheap black lace dress, and with only a bunch of scarlet geraniums at the throat by way of ornament—a girl of beauty so striking that it was no wonder she stood for a moment speechless, staring at her almost as if



she had been a ghost, or some image of a by-gone past.

As she was acknowledging the introduction, dinner was announced, and they all adjourned to the other room, Sir Piers and Lascelles giving their arms to the two matrons, and the young girls following together.

To an onlooker that dinner party would have seemed one of those pretty, home pictures the eye delights to dwell on. The table, with its snowy damask, glittering silver, cut-glass and delicate flowers; Aviee and Maraquita, each representing a different, but equally attractive type of beauty; the two elder ladies with the glancing light of diamonds and sapphires flashing in their attire; and lastly, Sir Piers and Lascelles—both men in their respective ways remarkable—all combining to make a picture in which every element seemed harmony.

When the ladies had retired to the drawing-room, Mrs. Foley made room for Maraquita on the couch beside her.

"Come and sit near the fire," she said; "it struck me at dinner you looked rather cold."

Maraquita smilingly denied the imputation, but nevertheless obeyed the request, and was so placed that her face caught the full light of the lamps while that of her hostess was in shadow.

"Perhaps you have been accustomed to a warmer climate than this," went on the elder lady, speaking in a far more gracious tone than was her wont to her social inferiors. You came from France, I believe?"

"Yes."

"But you had been in England before?"

"Not for many years."

"Still you are English?" persisted Mrs. Foley.

"I think so—oh! yes, of course I am!" she responded, rather confusedly, and growing vividly red as she spoke.

"I often thought of sending Aviee to school in Bruxelles, in order to perfect her French. I suppose they speak the language as well there as in Paris?"

"I don't know. I never was in Bruxelles."

"Or Paris?"

"Yes"—after a perceptible pause, "I have been in Paris, but not to school."

"Ah! I thought you were educated there."

"No—I was educated in Normandy."

"And Aviee tells me you are an orphan," said Mrs. Foley, taking her hand with an air of almost affectionate sympathy. "Do you remember much of your parents, or did they die in your infancy?"

"My mother died when I was in the convent, and I recollect hardly anything of her; my father—" she hesitated, growing pale, and at a loss how to continue. She was saved the trouble of deciding, for at that minute Sir Piers Lyngard and Doctor Lascelles entered the room, and the former immediately crossed over, and took up his position on the hearth-rug, opposite his hostess.

"Mrs. Foley, I have made a discovery," he said, smiling as his eyes met hers. "Shall I tell it you, or keep it to myself?"

"Give me the benefit of it, by all means," she responded, graciously; "discoveries were certainly not intended to remain the sole property of their originator."

"Then you shall have it. I find there exists a most striking likeness between you and Miss Leigh."

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed, sharply, and with an uneasy laugh. "What can possibly have put such an idea in your head?"

"Nothing save the fact itself. I appeal to you, Miss Foley, and Doctor Lascelles to corroborate my statement."

They both looked round from the book of engravings they were turning over, and studied the two faces on the couch. Yes, there could be no denying the truth of Sir Piers's assertion, for the resemblance, as they sat together, was undoubtedly striking. There were the same level brows, the same dark eyes, and straight, delicately chiselled nose—the only feature presenting a marked dissimilarity was the mouth,

for while the young girl's lips were full and sensitively curved, Mrs. Foley's were extremely thin, and had something of merciless determination in their close clasp.

"How strange that I never noticed it before!" exclaimed Aviee. Why, mamma, May is much more like you than I am!"

"That she very easily might be, seeing you are the image of your father!" retorted Mrs. Foley, apparently far from pleased at the remark.

"Miss Leigh and I have the same coloured hair and eyes, but that is all. Come," she added, rising, as if to put an end to the discussion, "let us have some music. Do you play, Miss Leigh?"

"A little."

"The invariable young lady formula!" laughed Sir Piers, going to the piano, and opening it; "it may mean so much, or so little. I wonder," he added in a low tone, as Maraquita took her seat—"what interpretation will be placed upon it in this instance!"

She did not answer, but sang a little pathetic German "Volklied" in a sweet, full contralto that had evidently been carefully trained, and was as musical as a peal of silver bells.

"You hide your lights under a bushel," he observed, as she finished; "I did not know you could sing."

"I do not see how you could be expected to know it," she answered, coldly, and with the curious reserve that was always in her voice when she spoke to him.

"Why so?"

"Because I am a stranger to you."

"Not quite," he said, leaning his elbow on the top of the piano, and standing in such a position as to prevent her leaving the music stool. "I came home nearly a week ago, and have seen you every day—although, to do you justice, you have tried as much as possible to avoid me. I suppose you have not forgiven the little ruse I practised upon you. Is that it?"

She turned over the leaves of some songs she had taken up, and did not reply, while he, looking down on her, found himself wondering at the length and beauty of the lashes lying on her richly-tinted cheeks.

"Besides," he continued, "the term 'strangers' is a relative one; some people may be acquainted for years, and yet deserve it, while others, after a couple of days' introduction, know each other almost as well as if their whole lives had been spent together. There is such a thing as instinctive sympathy, remember."

"And instinctive antipathy!"

"Assuredly. Do you mean to infer such is your present state of mind with regard to myself?"

He put the question laughingly, and bent his head to look into her eyes while awaiting the answer.

"Would it not be rude to declare it, even if it were true?" she responded, with a glance of demure mischief that Aviee herself might have given.

"Perhaps so, according to the world's code—for which I don't care one little bit—"

"Pray give us another song, Miss Leigh!" put in Mrs. Foley's voice, at this juncture—

she had been watching the *deux-dites* at the piano, and thought it quite time it should be put an end to. Maraquita complied, not altogether sorry for the interruption, seeing that she had been betrayed into a certain familiarity of tone with Sir Piers, which was the very last thing she desired.

As a matter of fact, there were two elements at work within her when she was speaking to him—the one born of her pride, which in the past had been so terribly humiliated that it made her shrink from a man's notice as a thing to be dreaded, lest it should turn to insult; and the other a subtle attraction that she did her best to struggle against, and which lent to her manner a chilling hauteur that would have repelled a good many men, but which rather served to fascinate him by reason of its novelty.

She had been so accustomed to the society of men to whom the word "woman" meant only an amusement for their leisure hours, a distraction from the cares of business, perhaps—at best, a toy to be played with, and then cast aside, that it was small wonder she had lost all faith in chivalry, or that she should draw back from admiration, however delicately it might be expressed. Besides this, and underlying it all, was the consciousness of her secret—a consciousness that seemed to have weighed on her even more heavily since the baronet's return than it had done before.

As she finished her song, Mrs. Foley came up, and laid her hand on her shoulder.

"I have been asking, and have obtained permission for you to stay here to-night," she observed, in her most winning tones; "Aviee talks of skating to-morrow, and will be delighted to have you for a companion."

"You are very kind," said the young girl, rather surprised at this display of friendliness from one who had been held up to her as the very incarnation of haughty exclusiveness; "but Lady Lyngard—"

"You need not think of Lady Lyngard—she and I have arranged everything satisfactorily," was the smiling retort—"all you have to do is to yield a passive acquiescence to plans already made."

And so it was decided she should remain until the next day, and Sir Piers and Lady Lyngard took leave, and drove off with Dr. Lascelles, who they would drop on their way. After their departure, Aviee said—

"May will sleep with me to-night, mother."

"She will do nothing of the sort," replied Mrs. Foley, composedly; "I have had a fire lighted in the white-room; and I certainly shouldn't think of running the risk of letting you two girls get together, and sit up talking half the night, as, of course, you would do if you had the opportunity."

Aviee pouted, but experience had taught her the futility of attempting to battle against her mother's will, even when that mother was an indulgent one, so she said nothing; and Mrs. Foley, who insisted on Maraquita having some wine to neutralize the effect of a strange bed, and make her sleep, went to a side table, on which was a silver tray, holding decanters. She poured out a glass of sherry, and then, glancing round to make sure she was unobserved, dropped in a very small quantity of dark coloured liquid out of a bottle she took from her pocket, after which she handed the wine to her guest.

As it happened, however, Maraquita did not drink it, for while Mrs. Foley had gone to the door to speak to the butler, Aviee, in the act of reaching across the table, turned the glass over, and spilled its contents, and Maraquita, who really did not wish for the wine, forbade her replenishing them. Soon afterwards she was conducted upstairs to a large, low room, at the end of a gallery, in which a fire was burning, and throwing ruddy gleams on the white walls and drapery that had given it its name.

"You are not afraid of ghosts, are you?" queried Aviee, who had come with her.

"No. I can't understand being afraid of what doesn't exist,"—laughing.

"Oh! So you don't believe in them? That's a good thing, because"—a spice of mischief in her tone—"this room has the reputation of being haunted, and I was going to offer to come and sleep with you."

"But your mother forbade you!"

"As to that, I could easily slip in, and she would never know anything about it," said this audacious young ignoror of the fifth commandment.

However, Maraquita negated the suggestion, and Aviee, rather piqued, said good-night, and left her. Her first action, when she was alone, was to go to the door for the purpose of securing it—a purpose frustrated by the fact of there being no key in the lock.

"I don't suppose burglars will come in, or, at any rate, if they do, they won't molest me," she said to herself with a smile, as she undressed herself and got into bed, her thoughts

dwelling the while on the events of the evening, and Mrs. Foley's unlooked-for kindness. As a rule, she was the very reverse of suspicious; but somehow, in spite of her gracious demeanour, she did not trust Avie's mother—an instinct that was subtler than reason warned her against her, notwithstanding her apparent friendliness, and the lack of motive she had for trying to conciliate so unimportant a personage as Lady Lyngard's companion.

Presently her thoughts and the flickering shadows cast by the fire all seemed to mix themselves up together; her eyelids closed, and she fell into a deep, dreamless sleep. How long it lasted she could not have told, but she was suddenly aroused by a faint noise, caused through the chair she had placed against the door being pushed aside very gently and cautiously by someone who had already turned the handle.

Maraquita's first impulse was to scream out and alarm the house, but then the remembrance came that she was some distance from the servants' wing, and that Mrs. Foley was really the only person within earshot; and while she was thus debating the door was pushed open, and a female figure, stealing quietly in, advanced with a curiously gliding movement to the bedside.

Our heroine was certainly not a superstitious girl, but it must be confessed that just for one minute the remembrance of what Avie had said about the room being haunted came back to her, and she was conscious of a strange, sinking feeling at the heart, not greatly removed from terror, of the unknown spirit-world, which heretofore she had been inclined to ridicule.

The fire had burnt low, but all at once a coal fell in, and shot out a long spire of flame, which fell on the face of the intruder, distinctly revealing the features; and then, with a feeling of relief as well as surprise, Maraquita saw it was none other than Mrs. Foley!

What brought her there, at such an hour, and in such a manner? The young girl asked herself; and, at the same time, resolved to make no movement, but give herself a chance of gaining an answer to her query, by feigning sleep, and seeing what would happen next.

Mrs. Foley stood for a moment motionless, and listened to her guest's breathing, which was calm and regular, and apparently satisfied her that Maraquita slumbered; then she lighted a candle she had brought with her, and held it in front of the girl's face. It was perfectly tranquil and composed, so she put the candle on a table beside her, and after turning down the bedclothes unfastened her nightdress and bared the left shoulder, thus revealing a crescent-shaped mark of a bright red colour—evidently a birthmark.

Mrs. Foley drew a deep breath as if she had received a shock of some kind, and sank down on a chair, putting her hand to her eyes, and remaining perfectly still for three or four minutes, during which Maraquita was afraid lest the loud beating of her heart might betray her.

It seemed to her that if her visitor remained much longer she would be forced to cry out, or give some token, showing she was aware of her presence.

But Mrs. Foley, having attained her object, had no further motive for staying.

She again gazed intently at the mark, as though to assure herself she was not mistaken, and then carefully pulled up the bedclothes, took up her candle, and quitted the room as silently as she had entered.

#### CHAPTER IV.

THE next afternoon was keen and frosty, but bright with sunshine, that if it did not in reality give much warmth, at least lent its appearance to the landscape.

The sky was very clear, and of a deep, intense blue, against which the network of twigs on the elms looked like a fine tracery of delicate lace, sparkling with a fairy-like coating of

icicles above the crisp earth; and in the air was a keen exhilaration, such as comes sometimes in the after-Christmas days.

Maraquita, Avie, and Sir Piers—who had ridden over to the Manor—all felt themselves affected by it as they walked through the avenue to the large pond at the end, whose waters now lay bound under the silent spell of the Ice King.

"Who will deny winter has its charms?" said the Baronet, who seemed to have thrown off the semi-gloom that so often oppressed him, and yielded himself to the influence of Avie's insouciant gaiety. "People may grumble as much as they like about our treacherous British climate, but for my part I am inclined to think it is, on the whole, as good as any other."

"You haven't given yourself a chance of testing it lately," returned Avie. "Do you intend staying at home now?"

"I think so; but I must wait, and let circumstances guide me in a measure. I have arrived at that age, Miss Foley, when one says 'yes' or 'no' with a reservation, because experience has taught me what very little control we have over our own actions—we are all slaves of an imperious destiny."

Avie shrugged her shoulders sceptically.

"I don't believe it, Sir Piers!—at least, so far as women are concerned. If I want a thing I generally contrive to get it."

"May you continue in the way you have begun, and suffer no disappointments."

"I don't anticipate them, at all events," she said, blithely; "it seems to me that the truest philosophy consists in taking the goods the gods give one, and making the best of them, without troubling about future consequences. I never spoil a pleasure by wondering what I shall have to pay for it."

They had now arrived at the edge of the pond, and Sir Piers was proceeding to unstrap the bundle of skates thrown over his shoulder when a figure suddenly appeared from the little belt of pines and Scotch firs, which, as it advanced nearer, proved to be that of Dr. Lascelles.

"Are you coming to join us?" said the Baronet, who had rather taken a fancy to his new neighbour.

"No," rejoined Lascelles, flushing a little. "I was on my way to the Manor to see the housekeeper, who Mrs. Foley sent word this morning was not very well."

"There is not much the matter with her—only a cold I think; and it won't make any particular difference whether you go now or an hour later," observed Avie, lifting her eyes from the ground to give him a glance of shy entreaty that he was powerless to withstand. And so, being provided with a pair of extra skates that Sir Piers had brought, he allowed himself to remain, in spite of the warning reason gave him of his folly.

Mrs. Foley, watching the trio start from the Manor, had observed with satisfaction that Sir Piers was at her daughter's side, and had hoped this order would continue during the whole of the expedition—a hope not destined to be fulfilled; for directly they were on the ice Avie and Lascelles started off together, leaving the others to follow.

Perhaps it was the rapid exercise and the delightful motion of skimming along that smoothly polished surface, or perhaps—and this is more likely—it was the sense of her own buoyant youth asserting itself, but assuredly a change came over Maraquita; and instead of the quiet reserve that usually characterised her she was as gay, as animated, and apparently as happy as Avie herself.

In youth it is so very hard to be miserable. Nature herself forbids it, and, strive as she might, Maraquita could not fight against the spell which made the blood course hotly through her veins, and her pulses throb with a vigour that sent the vivid colour of a pomegranate's red heart to her cheeks, the brilliance of frost-lit stars to her lovely eyes—her whole being seemed instinct with a new delight.

"Miss Leigh," said Sir Piers, looking at her, as they paused for a moment, "there is something different in you this afternoon—you are elated, excited."

"No," she answered, smiling at him, "I have just awoke to the truth of the philosophy Avie advocates—that of enjoying the present, and making the most of it."

"And you think she is right?"

"I am sure. The opportunities of practising it come seldom enough, but at least, when they do, we can take advantage of them."

He did not speak for a moment; then, with the air of one, who makes a sudden determination, he said,—

"I also will become Miss Foley's disciple—rather later in the day than you, it is true, but still, not too late, we'll hope. Come, give me your hand, and we will make the circuit of the island."

He took it without waiting for his command to be obeyed, and holding it in his, they started off, swiftly and smoothly, in long graceful lines that were the very poetry of motion.

The sun travelled slowly round to the west; a crimson glory flashed above the sombre darkness of the pine-wood, and reflected itself in the gleaming steel-blue of the ice; then the early winter darkness set in, and might put on her regalia of star jewels, which glittered with a keen, chill lustre up in the purple dome above, while from beyond the trees appeared,—

"The cold chaste moon, the queen of Heaven's bright isle: Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles. That wandering shrine of soft, yet icy flame, Which ever is transformed, yet still the same, And warms not, but illumines."

After taking off his companion's skates, Sir Piers offered his arm, and they set off for the Manor, and to Maraquita that walk, through the twilight stillness of the winter evening, seemed like the beginning of a new era in her life—the birth of a phase of feeling which she dared not analyse, like to whose subtle sweetness nothing she had experienced could ever compare.

She said very little, but the baronet made up for her silence by talking as he seldom took the trouble to talk. He spoke of his travels, of the strange cities he had seen, the strange sights he had witnessed—he led her in fancy through the superb palaces of the Orient, across sandy stretches of desert, under the drooping palms and luxuriant vegetation of the tropics, away to trackless depths of virgin forests where Nature's Temple was unviolated by the foot of man, and strange flowers blossomed in the gorgeous profusion of their untrained loveliness, unseen by human eyes.

Meanwhile, Avie and Lascelles were following, slowly enough, in spite of the cold.

"I think," said the young girl, looking up at the sky, with the air of one in a position to fathom its secrets, "I think the frost will continue; and, if so, we can have some more skating to-morrow."

He did not reply.

"You will come?" she continued, half-hesitatingly, and stealing a glance at his face, which looked very pale in the starlight.

"I think not."

"But why?" after a pause, "You are fond of skating, and"—with a little constrained laugh—"you don't object to our society, I suppose?"

"That," he returned, gravely, "is a remark to which I am sure no answer is needed."

"Then what should prevent your joining us, if it would give you pleasure?"

"The fear lest the pleasure should become so great and necessary to me that I should be unable to forego it!" he answered, with quick passion, stopping suddenly, and facing her. "Why do you compel me to say these things? Why do you render the resolve I had made so much harder to keep? You know the reason I ought not to come—you must know quite well, it is you I fear, and the intoxication your presence brings!"

Just for a second the vehemence of his tone startled her, and she drew back; then another



feeling, stronger than all, made her put out her hand and lay it on his sleeve.

"But why should you fear me?" she said, very softly, raising her luminous eyes, and hardly able to speak the words through the heavy beating of her heart.

"Because I love you!"

There was a moment's silence; he made no movement towards her even while his eyes were fixed on her face with an agony of tenderness in their rapt gaze; and though the mere touch of her slender hand sent a thrill through all his pulses, he did not attempt to take it in his own.

"I love you!" he repeated, "but I had no right to tell you so, because I have no right to ask you to be my wife. You are a rich heiress, and I only a poor struggling surgeon; still this is not the only thing that stands in the way. There is a secret in my life which I cannot tell you now, but which is enough to prevent me from asking any woman to marry me."

"A secret!" she echoed, in a faint whisper, growing as white as he was; "is it a secret of sin?"

"Yes, a sin committed many years ago, when the temptation was very great, and I was very young. Ah! Avicé—darling—don't judge me too harshly. Heaven knows how bitterly I have repented, and how, even at this moment, I am doing my best to expiate it!"

"Will you not tell me what it was?"

"I cannot," he said, groaning, "not yet! In a little while, perhaps, all necessity for concealment will be over, and then you shall hear everything. I know how wrong I have been to say so much to you, but at first, I never dreamed it would come to this; and my life was so hopeless, so dreary, that to give up your society was like shutting a ray of sunlight out of a dark room. Now I see my mistake, and for the future I must not even approach within the sound of your voice lest it should make me forget honour and my own resolution; but though Fate has parted us, yet believe this much, Avicé—that I love you, darling, I love you!"

And to Avicé, startled and bewildered, it seemed the beginning of her romance was also its end.

(To be continued.)

## HER GREAT MISTAKE.

—O—

### CHAPTER VIII.

No man ever loved his wife with a more tender love than Alan, Earl of Elsdale, bore to the girl who had once been Florence Warburton. The sleeping beauty he had discovered in the wood held his whole heart. She was his one object in life, and yet with the blindness of a man's nature he never understood that pain and suffering might come to his wife from the society of the woman who had once been his fiancée.

Alan had a true, generous heart. When Sybil broke her old troth she killed his love for her at a blow. To him from that time forward she was nothing but his cousin's widow.

Never once did it occur to him that she and her mother-in-law might have indulged far different dreams.

So long as he was unmarried he shunned Lady Dane steadily, but when he had won the treasure of Florence Warburton's love, in the depth of his happiness he forgave even Sybil. He received her courteously at his house, he treated her as an honoured guest.

It never came into his head to fancy his idolized wife, whose felicity he would have purchased at any cost, could suffer from his generosity.

"What do you think of our guests, Floy?" he asked her, the first evening, when he came upstairs and found her in her dressing-room, her fair hair floating over her shoulders.

"I like your aunt very much, she is so kind and gentle!"

"And Sybil?"

Every instinct of the girl's nature was against this beautiful, fascinating woman, but she shrank from saying so. She owed everything in the world to Alan, how could she speak against his kinswoman?

"Lady Dane is very lovely!"

Lord Elsdale smiled fondly.

"To some eyes, perhaps. I prefer golden hair to that ebony hue. Floy, do you like your home, dear? Do you think you can be happy here?"

"I like it very much! I could be happy anywhere with you!"

He stood bending over her, one hand caressing her golden head.

"My aunt will be a mother to you! It is so long since you had a mother, you poor, lonely little child!"

The tears were in her eyes. She longed to tell him everything, but something stronger than herself held her back.

In a very few days the Earl and Countess had settled down at the Manor. Florence was completely at home, and there was not the slightest reason for the dowager and her daughter-in-law to linger, and yet they did linger.

Perhaps they found their present quarters too comfortable willingly to forsake them. Certainly, they put the most liberal construction upon Lord Elsdale's invitation, and the peer in his easy, good nature made them welcome.

And to Florence their continual presence was a daily trial, an ever-present grief. She loved her husband fondly. She wanted him to herself. The dowager she really loved, and would gladly have kept always at the manor; but Lady Dane was a very different person.

Outwardly flattering and caressing in her manner to the young Countess, Sybil never missed an opportunity of wounding the sensitive nature so different from her own.

If Florence and her husband arranged to take a drive, Lady Dane was sure to appear ready dressed at the moment the carriage came round, and take it as a matter of course that she should accompany him, under pretence of sparing the young wife trouble. She assumed the authority that usually belongs to the mistress of a household—the servants appealed to her, the Earl himself consulted her.

"I am nothing but a plaything!" thought poor Florence, bitterly. "She is Alan's companion and confidant!"

And the Earl was so unconscious of his wife's feelings that he frequently congratulated himself on her having such a companion and assistant as Sybil.

He never saw the gathering shadow on the fair young brow—never noticed that while Lady Dane talked glibly to him on almost every subject Florence grew day by day graver and more silent.

Things came to a climax. One fair March day, Alan strolling into his wife's boudoir found her in tears.

"Florence!" he cried, amazed, "what is the matter, my darling? Why are you crying?" But she buried her head on his shoulder. For some time she did not speak.

"What is it?" he repeated. "My dear, what are you grieving for?"

Even then she did not tell him all. She only said she was dull. He seemed always away from her.

"You foolish child!" and he stooped to kiss her. "You know I am happiest at your side! I am obliged to go about the estate sometimes. It has been a good deal neglected, and there is much to be done."

"Take me with you?" she whispered. "Oh, Alan! I get so tired of sitting all alone!"

"But you are not alone; there is Sybil!"

"Lady Dane is not you!" whispered the Countess.

"Well, will you ride with me to Audley End this afternoon; I want to see a farmer about a lease?"

She looked up into his face.

"Do you mean quite alone? Shall I have you all to myself?"

"Of course you will!"

Riding had always been a favourite pastime with the young Countess. She had been the boldest equestrienne of all the pupils at Connaught House, so she went upstairs after lunch with a light heart to prepare for her excursion.

She came down in ten minutes dressed in a habit of dark-blue cloth, her hat of plain felt, the same shade. Very young and childlike she looked, her silver-mounted riding whip held in her little gauntleted hand; but the smile on her lips died as she approached the terrace steps, for three horses stood waiting, and Lady Dane also, in an equestrienne's attire, stood talking with Alan.

Florence looked from one to the other, and forgot her usual gentleness.

"You promised to ride with me, Alan!" she said, plaintively.

"He is quite ready!" returned Lady Dane, equably.

"We shall have a lovely afternoon for our excursion!"

"I think I shall stay at home!" said the Countess.

"Stay at home!" exclaimed Alan. "My dear child, the ride was your own idea!"

"But I wanted to go with you!" a very pronounced stress on the "you."

Lady Dane laughed sarcastically.

"Clearly I had better stay at home. Why did you not give me a hint, Lord Elsdale, that my company was not required, instead of leaving me to learn it in such a very peculiar fashion?"

Alan stood between the two women—his wife and the woman who had been his first love. His every sympathy was with Florence, but Sybil was his guest. He could not encourage rudeness to her.

"You will do no such thing!" he said, decidedly. "Florence could not have meant your society would be unwelcome!"

"I did mean it!" said the Countess, fairly roused. "I meant just what I said!"

"What a little savage!" muttered the Viscountess between her teeth, not so low but that the Earl overheard the words.

"Then you were guilty of a flagrant piece of rudeness!" he returned, coldly, addressing his wife. "However much of a child you may be, you must know a hostess ought never to speak so uncourtously to a guest!"

Florence looked at him with flashing eyes, in which the tear-drops sparkled only too plainly, but she said nothing.

"She is only a child!" said Lady Dane, pleasantly. "You must pardon a schoolgirl's *gaucherie*, Lord Elsdale."

"Madam," said the Countess, with a strange, new dignity, "I need no one to intercede for me to my husband!"

She mounted the terrace steps, never once turning her head to look at the two she left there.

Lord Elsdale watched her with a longing, yearning expression in his dark eyes.

"You had better run after her!" said Lady Dane, with icy politeness. "I can go indoors and take off my habit. It is clear I shall have no ride to-day. You would not dare to escort me after your wife's very plain expression of her sentiments!"

Lord Elsdale could not bear the sneer. He was an intensely proud man. Not even for his wife's sake would he let it be said he "did not dare."

In perfect silence he handed Lady Dane to her saddle, and they rode off.

The Earl strained his eyes to his wife's windows, hoping to catch a last sight of her fair face, but none gladdened him.

For some time neither he nor his companion spoke; but his silence nettled her, and at last she said, pettishly,—

"You are not a very lively escort, Lord Elsdale!"

He started.

"I beg your pardon. I was thinking."

"Of your wife! I wonder what I have done to make myself so distasteful to her?"

"You are not really that. Lady Elsdale is little more than a child, and she is given to speak her mind plainly."

"So it seems. Wasn't it a pity you didn't send her to school for a year before you married her. No offense, only it might have spared you trouble."

"I am not afraid," said Alan, dryly, "and I think my wife has had schooling enough, since she spent fifteen years at one establishment."

"Really?"

"Really. I often tell her she ought to be a very learned young lady."

"But hadn't she any relations?"

"A father, but he was in India. He died there last year, and she went to live with an aunt near Westfield, that is how I found her."

Lady Dane listened with well assumed interest; she cared nothing in the world about the Earl's constabulary, unless she could learn from it something detrimental to his wife. The widow had conceived a hatred as bitter as it was wicked, as malignant as unjust for the fair young girl who had become Countess Elsdale.

Seeing the Earl day by day in familiar intercourse, had brought back to her too keenly the days when they were plighted lovers. She, alas! had cared for him—nay, cared for him still far more than she had ever done for the man she had married. He was kind and courteous to her now, ever ready to promote her pleasure, and she was blind enough to imagine that had he only been free he would have knelt to her again and sued for her hand.

Blinded by her vanity she could not see that Alan's kindness was that of indifference; that he had forgotten their former relations sufficiently to bring her to his home as his young wife's guest showed this could she only have seen it.

She hated Florence because the girl stood between her and happiness; she accused Florence of robbing her of wealth, title, and the man she loved. Whereas her own falseness of long ago had so robbed her; and if Florence Warburton had never been born, or, being born, had never crossed Lord Elsdale's path, the results would have been just the same. When Sybil broke her troth with Alan Dane she broke it never to be renewed.

She could not marry him now; she could not commit the act which made Florence his wife and Countess of Elsdale; but surely she could cloud the young wife's felicity. Surely cunning words and covert insinuations would weaken Alan's satisfaction in his choice! Beautiful as an angel this cruel vindictive woman had henceforward but one object, to wreck the happiness of Alan Dane, the man she loved, and the innocent girl she persisted in regarding as her rival.

It was easy to make the Earl tell her of affairs at Foxgrove, and how the Foxes had tried to make his darling a modern Cinderella; it was easy to lead him to speak of his aunt Emily's fondness for her, and how his cousin had served in the same regiment as her father, and been the first person to welcome her to Westfield. Sybil listened greedily, and before she reached the Manor she had learnt two things, that Alan was as ignorant as a stranger of his wife's family history, and also that he was possessed of a strange insane jealousy, dormant, it is true, yet ever present, of his cousin Cecil.

Sybil looked into his face as he described Captain Fane's meeting with Florence in the train.

"You have spoilt the story," she said, with a pretty smile. "According to all the rules of romance in should have been the captain who carried off the lovely princess from her cruel guardians."

"Ah!" said Alan, a little triumphantly, "you see romance is not always to be depended on;" and then they turned their horses and galloped back to the Manor.

It seemed to Florence Warburton—we beg

pardon, Lady Elsdale—that no moment of her life had been so bitter as that in which she saw her husband ride off at her enemy's side; for that Lady Dane was her enemy she felt very certain.

Young as she was she had already known bitter sorrow; but not even when in the summer sunshine they broke to her the news of her father's death, or, later on, when on a cold November night she learned her mother's miserable story, had she suffered as she suffered now.

"He is tired of me," she whispered sorrowfully, to herself. "Oh! Alan, I know I was far beneath you, a little unformed schoolgirl; but I loved you, my darling, and I never thought that in less than four short months you could weary of my love."

She threw herself on the sofa in her boudoir and tried to think out the problem. If Alan loved Lady Dane why had he not married her? If he really loved her (Florence), what had she done to weary him in so short a time?

"I will go to him to-night," thought the young wife, sadly. "I will tell him my heart feels breaking, and ask him to send her away. We were happy before she came here; we should be happy again if only her cold, beautiful face were gone."

Her resolution was taken; she would dress for dinner and welcome her husband with smiles on his return, but she would tell him the truth plainly, her heart was breaking. When he heard that he would be merciful and send away the cold, scornful beauty whose presence had so troubled her.

She dressed quite early, a little scheme of meeting her husband on his return and being reconciled to him at once making her anxious to get her toilet over. She wore a soft white gauzy robe, trimmed here and there with lace, and with great bunches of sweet Parma violets fastened at the throat and at the sleeves. Excitement had lent her cheeks a brilliant flush, and she looked a creature to take all hearts by storm.

She had hardly finished dressing when a servant came to her.

"Captain Fane has arrived, my lady; he is in the drawing-room."

Florence knew that her husband had casually invited the Captain to look in on them any time when he had a couple of days to dispose of. She had utterly forgotten that strange speech of Alan's denoting jealousy of Cecil, and she went down to receive her visitor with real pleasure beaming in her soft brown eyes.

It was well for Cecil that before his interest in her had ripened into love he learned she was another's. It was well, too, for him that since her marriage another face, far different from her's, was fast stealing into his heart. The brave young officer could meet his cousin's wife without a single pang; he gave to Florence a greeting as simple and as affectionate as he might have given to a sister.

"You see I have remembered Alan's invitation," he said, brightly. "Well, how do you like the Manor, my fair chasteleine?"

But as he looked at her he saw the cloud which the excitement of welcoming him had banished again return to her brow, and he knew as well as though he had been told so by her own lips that things were going hardly with his old superior officer's daughter.

It was the thought of the brave old colonel who had been so good to him and whose very hope had centred in this girl that made Cecil so anxious about Lady Elsdale's happiness. He knew that his cousin had made a love-match; that he had fairly worshipped his young bride; and now, after not four months of wifehood, he found that bride with tear-stains on her cheeks and eyes whose brightness was dimmed with weeping.

"Where is Alan?" he asked, quickly.

"Alan is out riding."

"Don't you like riding? You used to be so fond of the open air!"

"I am very fond of riding, but I did not care to go with them."

"You have visitors then?"

"The Dowager Countess and her daughter-in-law are staying with us."

"Her daughter-in-law! You don't mean Lady Dane?"

"Yes! Why, do you know her?"

"I used to know her long ago!"

"Did you quarrel with her?" asked Lady Elsdale, with sudden interest. "Oh! Captain Fane, do you like Lady Dane?"

Cecil hesitated. "I liked her well enough to like or dislike her. She behaved strangely!" he muttered, half to himself. "But, there, that is long ago!"

"I don't like her," said Florence, slowly. "It may be very wrong of me, but I don't trust her. There is something cruel and treacherous in her eyes, beautiful though they are."

Cecil Fane took the girl's white hand in his. He knew a little of Lady Dane's character, and he guessed the work she was trying to do at the Manor.

"My dear little cousin," he said, gravely, "I quite understand what you mean; but take my advice, and never let Lady Dane suspect your doubts of her; she would revenge them terribly."

To his surprise the girl shivered even in the warm, cosy drawing-room.

"I am afraid of her," she answered, sadly. "I can't make Alan understand, but I feel as if she would do me some dreadful injury."

"She could not," cried Cecil, eagerly. "How could she injure you when you have Alan to protect you? He knows her for what she really is."

"Alan likes her; he is always telling me how much he is pitted she is."

"It is very generous of him," and Cecil shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose he can afford to forgive her now."

"To forgive her! Did she ever injure him?"

The Captain passed in dismay. He had brought upon himself a question he could not, he dared not answer.

Florence Dane stood near him, her brown eyes fixed upon his face as though she were trying to read his very soul as she waited for his answer. Truly that was an awkward moment for the return of the equestrians.

Lord Elsdale, hearing of Cecil's arrival, had come straight to the drawing-room. Lady Dane followed him in her habit. They were just in time to witness the appealing glance which the Countess fixed upon her visitor.

## CHAPTER IX.

MAY had come with its long, bright days, its glad spring flowers and pleasant sunshine.

London was full, for the season, promised to be an unusually brilliant one.

The West-end was crowded with rank and fashion, and at every ball and assembly the fair young Countess of Elsdale was the queen. She had been presented at Court directly after Easter. Royal lips had deigned to speak in praise of her sweet, artless loveliness, and she was the acknowledged belle of the season. And she was happy?

People said so. Artists who raved of her beauty said it is true that the impression of her face was full of pathos, but the general public declared that her felicity was perfect. Wife of one of the richest noblemen of the day, idolised by her husband, admired by all who knew her, surely, they argued, she had all that heart could wish for!

Only Cecil Fane, watching her with an affection as innocent as it was sincere; knew that there was a cloud upon the sky, that brilliant as was her fate, it was not the life she had dreamed of when she stood at the altar of the simple village church and swore to be the wife of Alan Dane.

There had never been an open breach between the Earl and his wife. The storm threatened at the close of the last chapter never broke. It was averted by Cecil's tact.

Neither Florence nor her husband ever knew



that the Dowager Countess departed for her own home suddenly only because Captain Fane had hinted to her that Lady Dane's presence marred the domestic happiness of her nephew.

Florence stood at her husband's side watching the carriage drive away, and when it was out of sight she turned to him with a little sigh of deep content.

"We have only each other now," she whispered.

But the Earl answered her with no caress. He was looking at her steadily, almost coldly.

"And do you think we shall be happier?"

"Yes," she said, surprised. "It may be very foolish, dear, but I grudged you to our guests. I think I wanted all your time and attention for myself."

Alan caught his wife's two hands in his.

"Do you mean it, Florence?"

"Of course I mean it, Alan."

He looked into her eyes.

"My darling, I may have misjudged you. I may have forgotten the years between us, but I will never doubt you again, my sweet, if you will look into my face and tell me you have never deceived me."

A great lump came into her throat. How could she look into his face and tell him that, when she had deceived him for months on one all-important point? When even now she was hiding from him that her mother toiled hard as a sempstress for daily bread.

She hesitated—she could not speak the lie.

Alan dropped her hands suddenly, and went into the house. He understood her silence, and from that moment their altered life began. He was never unkind to her. He studied her every wish, only the heart was gone out of his tenderness. It was as though he left her the empty case of his affections, while the jewel within of his trust and love had forsaken her.

They drove together to make calls, they appeared in company together, but at home Florence saw very little of her husband. He went his way, she hers. He never inquired as to her pursuits, never told her of his own. He gave her every title of honour due to his Countess—he gave her none of the tenderness his wife could expect.

And they went to London with this great unspoken gulf between them, which neither attempted to bridge over.

They plunged into the vortex of fashion. Alan went in for every gaiety that was the mode. He tried in a whirl to drown thought, and all the while, whatever he said or did, wherever he went or whoever he was with, but one face haunted him—the face of his own wife, the child he had found sleeping in the wood, who had once been so near to him and now was so far.

He never reproached her, never once. He treated her with the utmost kindness, the most deferential attention, only he never caressed her, he never willingly remained *à table* with her.

He came into her boudoir one bright May morning to bring her some card of invitation which had been taken to him by mistake, and he almost started as he saw the fragile delicacy of her complexion, the wan, wistful expression of her face.

She was leaning back on a low, easy chair. She started as he entered, and two bright pink spots burnt on her cheeks.

"How ill you look," he said, astonished at her wan, weary look.

"I am rather tired."

"Tired of pleasure?"

The brown eyes filled with tears.

"You need not tell me; I am nothing but a butterfly," she said, reproachfully. "Indeed, I know it well enough."

He sat down near her. It was the first time he had entered her boudoir since they came to London.

"My dear child," he said, with something of his old tenderness in his manner, "I am not reproaching you. Youth is the time for enjoyment."

"I don't enjoy myself," she returned, abruptly.

"Don't you? I thought you had rather a gay time, Florence?"

"And I hate it."

"You hate it?"

"Yes, these balls and parties and crowds of people I don't care for; I hate them all."

"Then why go to them?"

"One must do something."

He looked at her sorrowfully.

"You are young to say that."

She shook her head.

"I feel old enough. Oh, Lord Elsdale, sometimes I can't believe that only one little year ago I was a happy girl at school."

"Which means you are not happy now."

She did not contradict him.

"Florence," and his voice was husky with emotion, "Heaven knows I am not blaming you. We have made a great mistake, dear, and I am most to blame because I was so much older. I ought to have known better."

She waited a moment.

"Could we undo it?"

"Undo what?"

"Our marriage. That is the mistake you mean."

"Has it come to that? Do you really wish our marriage undone?"

"I thought you wished it."

He was silent. Then he laid one hand gently upon her head.

"My dear, you don't know what you are talking of. You are my wife—nothing in the world can alter that."

She did not answer, but he knew she was crying.

"Would you like to ask any of your friends to stay with you?"

"No."

"One of your cousins—you used to like Pussy?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Do you think I could bear for them to see how we live? No, Lord Elsdale, we will keep our misery to ourselves, please."

She had learned his secret. She knew quite well that Lady Dane had been his fair, false love of other days, and she believed, poor child, that had the only met Sybil again before the married her his heart would have been faithful to its first choice. There was the cause of her misery, and he—he believed the secret she had confessed to keeping from him was that of her love for his cousin Cecil.

Truly these two were at cross-purposes. Each loved the other better than life itself, and yet neither had that perfect trust that entire faith which would have pierced the cloud dividing them.

He went out; they had been nearer an understanding than ever before since the fatal day when they stood together on the terrace steps at the Manor; but it had failed, and the attempt at a reunion had but left them further apart.

Florence sat on alone, her sad thoughts for company, when a servant brought in a little note.

"It came by hand, my lady, there is no answer."

At first the Countess imagined it was a bill, and let it be disregarded on the table; then she thought it might be important, and opened it.

She found within the envelope a single half-sheet of thin white writing-paper, one side of which was covered in a clear, delicate hand.

"I am very ill—it may be dying—my darling; if you have any tenderness for your mother, and you can come to me without exciting your husband's suspicion, let me see you once more. It seems to me the very sound of your voice will soothe my pain."

A strange light came into the girl's eyes. She had never forgotten her mother. Again and again she had longed to go and pour out her troubles on that mother's bosom, but she was powerless, for she did not know the address where the sorrowful, lonely woman lived, nor yet the name by which she was known. Now

the knowledge had come to her, and she was determined to use it at once. She had not the clearest idea where Caroline-street was situated, but no doubt she could find out.

She went upstairs at once, and dressed herself in the plainest costume she could find—a tight-fitting, black costume; she put on a small, black bonnet, took up her parasol, and went to the hall, but she had yet to learn that people possessed of numerous servants are apt to have a difficulty in accomplishing any expedition the least out of the common.

The butler looked amazed as he beheld his mistress.

"The carriage is not round, my lady."

"I know, Simmonds, I am not going far; I can walk."

"Shall I call, Marie, my lady?"

Evidently, in Simmonds's eyes, his mistress was not fit to take care of herself.

"No," returned Lady Elsdale, shortly; "I am going to make a call, I shall not be long."

He made no further suggestions, and finally condescended to open the door for her ladyship, but he did it with an air of protest, as though reminding his mistress that he entirely washed his hands of the responsibility of her rashness.

Poor Florence!

It seemed such an easy thing to take a cab and call anywhere she pleased, but she had never in her life before found herself alone, on foot, in the London streets, and she had not the slightest idea which was the way to the nearest cab-stand, add to which that she was very beautiful—that her dress, simple though it was, had a certain *recherché* air which made it quite evident to anyone that she was one of the upper ten thousand—and you will have a little idea of her difficulties.

The first person she met was Lady Dane—Lady Dane attended by an elderly woman, half-maid, half-companion. The Viscountess stopped, and detained her kinswoman some minutes in conversation. Florence certainly liked her no better than she had done at the Manor, but she was older, and more worldly-wise, she never now openly showed her aversion.

"And where are you going?" asked Sybil, voraciously; "I think it's the first time I ever saw you out alone."

"I am not fond of going out alone; but it is necessary sometimes."

"Is it? With a devoted husband, and three or four carriages at your service?"

Florence got away at last. The next turn of the road brought her to her desired object. It was some minutes before she had screwed up her courage to speak to a cabman. Fortunately, she selected a very respectable Jehu, of fatherly airs and benevolent mien.

"Caroline-street? Yes, miss. Do you mean Caroline-street, Pimlico? Caroline-street, Strand? or Caroline-street, W.C.?"

Florence did not know, and said so. The man shook his head, doubtfully, and the girl was at her wit's end, when footsteps sounded behind them, and, looking up, she saw the pleasant face and broad shoulders of Cecil Fane.

"Are you in a difficulty?" he asked, cordially; "I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw you here."

"Yes; I want to go to Caroline-street, and I can't explain it."

"Oh! you mean Caroline-street, West Central," said Cecil, when she had told him all she knew of her destination; "may I see you there? I have an hour to spare, and I don't like the idea of your going alone."

"Thank you." Then, as they drove off—

"Captain Fane, is it very wrong for a lady to go out alone in London?"

"It is not wrong, but I wouldn't do it too often if I were you."

She blushed.

"I have just met Lady Dane, and she looked horrified."

"I wish you had not met her, Florence," his voice grew grave; "another time when you want to go so far from home take your own carriage or bring your man."

She looked at him wistfully.  
"I couldn't. I am going to see someone who is very ill."  
Cecil smiled.

"Do you know, for a moment, I was terribly frightened? I thought you had got into some money difficulty."

"Money difficulty! Why, Alan gives me more than I can spend."

"And this is a visit of mercy. Florence, I know you mean it well, only another time you must not go alone. I can't tell you what a dreary place Caroline-street is, or how I should regret your being there alone."

They were driving very quickly—so quickly that Florence never noticed her husband standing at a corner of Oxford-street, waiting to cross the road—she did not know that he had seen her, and, alas! what matters more, her companion; she knew nothing except that she was going to her mother—the mother who loved her so dearly, and who was so unhappy, and whose existence had caused the first secret between her and Alan.

The cab stopped at last, and she turned to Cecil with a little cry.

"It can't be here—oh! tell me they have made a mistake—while I live in luxury she can't be here!"

(To be continued.)

## TOM'S RUSE

It had rained almost incessantly for a week—"Forty days and forty nights without stopping once," Lily Benson said; and if ever a girl was spoiling to get into mischief, it was she.

Miss Lily was exactly seventeen; pretty, sweet, roguish, wilful; her name suited her.

"Oh, dear me!" she yawned, for the twentieth time, "I wish something would happen."

She was on her way to lunch, and as a sort of appetizer, perhaps, took the banister in her road, making the trip in exactly half the time it would have taken her small brother, Dick.

As she bounced into the dining-room, her mother looked up from her tea and an open letter.

"What do you think, Lil, Matty Westwood has written to me for another girl."

"Oh, indeed! she must take you for an intelligence office. What is the matter now?"

"Annie Beard was too pretty. I was afraid of that. 'Too many followers,' Matty says."

"I suppose she thinks because she's an old maid everybody else ought to be," said Lil; "or perhaps she is afraid her brother Tom may fall in love with the hired girl as a last chance."

"Poor Tom! It is too bad, I declare!" said Mrs. Benson. "He would have married long ago if it had not been for his sister. He never could look at a girl twice but that Matty took occasion to let her know distinctly that Westwood House was as much hers as Tom's, and that whoever married him would have to take her, too; and no girl could stand that."

"I just wish I had been there," said Miss Lily, doughtily. "Maybe it's not too late yet. How old is he, mamma?"

"I don't think he can be over thirty. But he looks twice that—poor fellow!—and scarcely stirs from his study now. A terrible book-worm."

"I don't pity him one bit!" said Lily. "He must be a regular Miss Nancy, to let his sister keep him under her thumb that way. You ought to send them Betsy Brown, mamma."

"To be sure. She'd be just the one, only she's deaf and dumb. But I'll see what Tom says about it. Matty said he would call; and here he is now," as the door-bell rang.

Lily slipped into the next room and peeped through the glass door at the visitor.

She saw a tall, slim gentleman, with the slightly-sloping shoulders of a student, and a delicate, handsome, refined face. She noticed

that his clothes looked rather seedy and carelessly put on—that he said little and smiled less.

He seemed to think that Betsy Brown would do—he must have some one, as his sister was sick in bed with neuralgia—and Mrs. Benson promised that she should meet him at the station that evening if she could go.

Soon after he left, Lily made her appearance attired for a walk, her roguish eyes rather brighter than usual, and the dimples dancing in her pretty red cheeks.

"Mamma, I can't stand this any longer! May I go and stay a few days with Ethel Rockwood?"

Mrs. Benson looked surprised, and made some objections, but in the end consented.

Lily and Ethel were very intimate, and usually contrived to be together at one house or the other most of the time. They were both fond of fun, and whatever mischief one could not think of, the other generally did.

"I can stop and see Betsy on my way," volunteered Lily, "and then you won't have to go out in all this rain, mamma."

So it was arranged.

As Tom Westwood stood on the railway platform, just before going into the train, a woman approached him, and gave him a note.

It was from Mrs. Benson, and informed him that the bearer was the Betsy Brown of whom she had told him.

Tom glanced at the woman.

She was rather small, and besides having on a large waterproof-cloak with the hood well-drawn-up, her head was muffled in the veil.

"I wonder how she knew me?" said Mr. Westwood to himself, and was going to ask her, when he remembered in time that she was deaf and dumb.

How, then, was he to communicate with her?

As if she had divined his thoughts, the woman produced a slate and pencil, and showed him her railway ticket which she had already purchased.

Tom glanced at the slate, but did not offer to use it.

"I hope Mattie will be satisfied this time," he muttered, audibly, as he motioned towards the carriage, and led the way.

Betsy followed, and took a seat beside him, ostentatiously displaying her slate and pencil.

As she did so, she dropped a bunch of freshly-plucked violets, which Westwood picked up and restored to her, wondering.

He was fond of violets himself, and he kept glancing at these as their faint, sweet, springy scent came to him.

Betsy, too, seemed fond of them, as she kept lifting them to her face, displaying at the same time a hand encased in marvellously ill-fitting, dingy, cotton gloves.

Tom Westwood could but notice the unpoetical conjunction.

Presently the train began to slow up, and reaching for Betsy's slate, he wrote on it,—

"We stop here."

As they rose to leave the train, Betsy, between her large travelling-bag and her slate, dropped her violets again, without knowing it, and as Westwood was picking them up, she stepped on his hand.

A low cry escaped her, Tom was sure, and he almost fancied some half-uttered words of apology. But in the noise and confusion about him, it was easy to be mistaken.

He put the violets into his overcoat pocket this time, and as they went out, took Betsy's bag from her and carried it himself.

A carriage was waiting for them, Westwood House being about two miles from the station; and as Tom assisted the new girl into it, he was struck by two things—one, the light, elastic movement, so unlike the old woman he had been told she was, and the other, the touch of her hand, which left a soft, warm, electric thrill in his, even through the coarse, cotton glove.

It was very dark, and raining hard, at seven o'clock, when they reached the Westwood's

house, and there was only a light in the hall, and an upper and lower room.

The Westwoods, brother and sister, used only a few rooms of the great, grand house, and kept no servants except a coachman, who was "man-of-all-work" out-of-doors, and one girl for the house. Betsy was a sharp economist.

As the coachman was leaving them at the foot of the doorsteps, he said to Tom,—

Miss Westwood said if you brought a girl with you she was to come up to her, to get her orders about supper."

Tom stood so near Betsy as the man said this, that he felt her start, and looked at her curiously.

He led the way into the house, and to a room with a fire, and left her there while he went to report to his sister.

The instant she was alone, Betsy began hurriedly to remove her cloak and unmuffle her face, thus disclosing a very prim-looking little person, in a dark-blue calico dress and long, check apron.

On her head was a curious kind of cap, made of black silk and lace, and large enough to completely cover her hair and tie under her chin.

The face thus enclosed was as fair and so as a child's, with lips of cherry bloom, and dark, roguish eyes, that seemed to laugh in spite of themselves.

She looked at herself in a hand-glass she had with her, and gave her cap an angry extra pull over the little face, that would look so rosy and pretty.

Then producing a pair of glasses, she managed with some ado to put them on, and stood biting her lips and trying to keep the dimples down, when Tom Westwood returned from his interview with his sister.

Tom came to a full stop in the doorway staring like a man bewitched at the odd little figure by the fire.

Recovering himself, he took her slate and wrote on it that she was to go upstairs, and he led the way.

Miss Westwood was in bed, buried in blankets to her eyes, and suffering dreadfully. She had obstinately insisted upon seeing the new arrival; but now when she had got her before her, and took the slate to write upon it, such a spasm of pain seized her that she almost threw it, pencil and all, at her brother, and hid abrieking under the blankets again.

"Take her away, and get your supper the best way you can!" she screamed to him. "I don't care whether you have any or not."

Silently, but unable to repress a smile, Tom motioned to Betsy, and they went downstairs again.

He took her now to the kitchen, which was cold, and showed her where were materials to build a fire. He opened the store-room and pantry doors, and conveyed to her, by means of signs and the slate, the information that she was to manufacture a supper for all of them out of what was there.

Then he went back to the sitting-room himself, and sat down thoughtfully before the fire.

He had not yet removed his overcoat, and as he sat there, he put his hand in his pocket, and absently pulled out the bunch of violets he had dropped there some time before.

As he did so, a paper which had been wrapped about the stems fell off, and smoothing it out, he saw that it was part of a torn envelope, addressed "Miss Lily Benson."

Meanwhile, Miss Lily—for she it was—reigned supreme in the kitchen, and wished she had never been born, or that several other people had not; deaf and dumb Betsy and the Westwoods among the number.

This, which the madcap had undertaken as a very good joke, was taking a practical turn, not at all in accordance with her fancied ideal.

"If it had not been for Ethel," she began, savagely, and took it back. "No, I won't say that. It was I, myself, addle-head that I was! But Ethel thought it would be such fun. Fun!" she repeated, contemptuously. "I



wish she could have some of it. I am as cold as Greenland, and as hungry as a bear, and I never made a fire in my life. I think I could fry some of that ham if it was cut, but it is not. Oh, how Ethel would laugh if she could see me! Hang these glasses!" as those unaccustomed appendages would wriggle down upon her nose. "I can't see anything through them, anyway. I'd take them off if I dared!"

She finally compromised matters by shoving them up on her forehead, ready for emergency. "Anybody can make a fire," she added to herself, reassuringly. "You've only to put in the paper and the wood and light it with a match"—which she proceeded to do, loading the huge, old-fashioned stove to the brim, with the nicest and largest sticks and great lumps of coal.

Then she found some matches, and as the first, second, and third deliberately went out as soon as applied to the wood, she put in a whole box and set it off.

"Better be on the safe side," she said, as she shut the door. "It's sure to go now, and the next thing I'll attack the ham."

"I wonder," she said, after a prolonged tussle with the carving-knife, "how they ever get through this horrid black rind."

She pondered a moment.

"I have it," she cried, dramatically. "I've seen our butcher. He uses a saw. Now where's the saw? I shall have to ask Mr. Westwood."

So she wrote on the slate, not without a thrill of pride.

"I have made the fire (✓), and now I want the saw to cut the ham. Where is it?"

And settling the glasses to their place once more, she proceeded to the sitting-room.

Tom Westwood had just time to escape from the hall, where he had been watching her, and listening to her, in a state of mind no words could do justice to.

He took the slate, and read what was on it with a countenance of supernatural sobriety, then gravely wrote beneath,—

"We always fry the ham first, and cut it afterwards, so as not to injure the temper of the saw."

As Lily perused this astonishing statement, and thought of the big ham in the store-room, her amazement was so excessive that, before she knew it, she exclaimed: "Oh!"

Then, in her fright, she dropped her slate. Stooping for that, off went her glasses, and Mr. Westwood reaching for the slate at the same time the two heads came in violent collision, and—as Lily herself eloquently expressed it afterwards:

"The first we knew we didn't know anything. He stood up and glared at me, and trod on my glasses; and I stood up and glared at him, and tried to put my cap straight. Then he picked up my glasses—nothing but the frames left—and calling me Miss Benson, solemnly presented them to me. Then—well, then we both burst out laughing, and laughed till we were sick. In the midst, his sister screamed down to know what was the matter. 'Tell her it's a crazy woman!' begged I, scared out of my senses indeed. 'Promise you'll be my wife, Lily, and I'll settle her,' said Tom. Of course I promised. Who wouldn't, under such circumstances? Besides, I was delighted to have outwitted Matty Westwood, though rather ashamed of the way I had done it. Tom settled it with his sister, I don't know how; but he did it, and I couldn't tell you to this day whether anybody had any supper that night or not. Marry him? Of course, I had to. Besides, I liked him; and Matty and I are very good friends. But she lives at Westwood, and we in the city." F.

**DANGER IN EARTHENWARE.**—A communication to the Paris Academy of Sciences calls attention to the dangers to which the use of glazed earthenware may expose people. Lead occurs abundantly in the glaze, and is readily extracted by any substance which is allowed to ferment. It is stated that the lead may be so fixed as to be harmless, by varnishing over the glazed surface with borosilicate of lime.

## FOUND WANTING.

### CHAPTER XVI.

REACHING her room, Christine stood for a few minutes with her hand pressed against her forehead. The coming out into the hall where the sunlight poured through the wide open door, the sounds of daily life in the house had given that scene in the drawing-room the likeness of a dream. It seemed out of the realm of things actual, and she herself another personality—not Christine Delmar—leaving this home for ever. Was this the end of it all then?

She dropped her hand and moved a step forward, looking up to a large photograph that hung on the wall before her. The pictured eyes looked back at her grave and unsmiling, as they had looked at her every day for this last year. Often and often she had stood here and wished she had power to soften that proud, unhappy face; now the wish had gone. She turned away. Already her resolute mind had formed some idea of her movements, and she rang the bell for her maid.

The maid had been with her in her school-days, and was deeply attached to her. She was not surprised at her mistress's announcement that she was going to London to her brother's for a few days, for she often left home with no more notice than this. Fanny proceeded to put together a few things in a small portmanteau, only asking if she should accompany her, as she had done before.

"I may be longer than a few days, Fanny," said Christine.

"Well, ma'am, all the more reason why I should wait on you. Mrs. Clifford can't spare her maid much."

"You must be ready in half-an-hour," said the young mistress, "and if you cannot you must follow me. Tell James to have the pony-chaise ready in that time, and you be there also. Now go, please."

The maid retired, and as she opened the door to go out in rushed Colin, springing on his mistress in boisterous delight at having found her. Christine threw her arms round him as if he had been a child.

"Colin, dear old Colin!" she said, pressing her face against his shaggy coat—"you break my heart! What will you say when I am gone. I am going, Colin—I am never coming back—never."

"Yes, you are," said Colin's beautiful eyes, fixed on her face with that intent, half-human look dogs wear sometimes, perhaps, in his dim canine understanding, wondering why his mistress kissed him again and again so earnestly. Then she led him gently from the room; she could bear it no longer.

A few special treasures she put in the portmanteau, locked it, and then went to a desk standing on a side-table. With steady hand she wrote a few lines to her husband, signed them simply "Christine," as if she could not put on paper the name she wished she had never borne, and as steadily put on hat and gloves. She forgot nothing she wanted to do; she moved here and there with the slow subdued movements of a person fearing a return of physical pain, but there was no falter, not a second's pause. Perhaps she had no distinct power of considering future consequences, yet she remembered to provide for immediate needs. She knew the housekeeper was out—she left a written message for her that the servants might not for the present think anything amiss. What else remained to be done now she was ready to go? She looked round the room she had entered a bride a year ago—such high hopes then! She recalled them calmly, without a tear, with perfect self-possession. She could not feel—she was too stunned; she could not even say farewell to this room where she had thought, and suffered, and hoped, and prayed a whole long year; she could only stand and gaze round blankly.

She went out by another door, she could not

see Colin again, nor did she go to see her piano; she could not enter that drawing-room—she shuddered as she hurried past it.

She met Fanny in the hall, the girl went up for the portmanteau, and as she came down and handed it to the servant, Christine held out to her the note for Delmar.

"Will you put that on the study table?" she said—"where your master will see it—he—he did not know I should go to-day."

She went to the carriage quickly, stepped in, and as Fanny joined her they drove off. Twenty minutes afterwards the London train left the station.

For hours the old house lay bathed in the warm light—not a sound from within, and no living creature about it save the dog lying watchful on the threshold between the great stands of flowers. Once or twice a pedestrian passed, and paused to look at the beautiful gardens and the quaint irregular house, and to envy the owner of them, and, perhaps, asked the first person he met what name the place bore. But the long, hot day came to a close—the trees began to cast their shadows onto the white road beyond the gates; the road itself as it stretched away looked less dusty and glaring; a subdued light crept softly over every object; the hush of a summer's evening had fallen on the vivid glory of the day. From far away on the river faint sounds of voices and laughter came, but even these ceased as the hours went on, and the gold and crimson faded from the sky.

It was near ten when a boat came slowly towards the house, the rower evidently using his oars in so listless a fashion that he must surely be pretty well exhausted. The still water just rippled over the blades that hours ago had flashed in and out like diamonds. A solitary speck on the dark river, the boat came on to the Daqueswood steps; there the rower threw his sculls down, stepped out, and fastened the painter, then paused, looking towards the house. But one light gleamed from it through the trees, and that one from his own study window. Its level rays shining steadily into the darkness seemed to solve the difficulty that had occurred to him with the force of a shock directly he put his foot on land.

How was he to meet Christine? What manner of greeting, what form of words could pass between them? For he was not like a man of but one nature—and that evil, good and evil in him were ever at war, and in his heart of hearts there was a deep shame that made him dread to see his wife. The unlighted house showed him she must be in her own sitting-room, which overlooked the road. Still, as he crossed the lawn the question came to him again—on what terms could they meet now?

In his utter exhaustion, mental and physical, he was able to think more clearly—his mind was cooler if still unsubdued. He went into the study, and tossing his white cap to the other end of the room, sat down.

He never remembered in his whole life to have felt such deadly fatigue—rest seemed impossible; he thought he never could know it again. It was an effort to rise and open the door, when he heard Colin's unmistakable whine.

The dog's manner was strange. He generally greeted his master by jumping on him with his paws on his breast; but as Delmar admitted him he stood still, looking up wistfully in his face, plainly asking for something.

"What's the matter, old fellow?" said Delmar, stroking his head.

In reply, Colin only waved his tail slowly, as a sort of acknowledgment of the caress, and looked still more wistful. Delmar felt a vague, cold fear. He understood dogs too well to fail to see that something was the matter—but what?

He was too weary to try and find out, and in turning from the dog his eye fell on the note lying on his desk addressed to himself. Christine's hand! What did it mean? He broke it open in his own impetuous way, without a moment's pause, read the few lines, and laid it down again, with a shaking hand. Passion

had reached that white heat for which there is no outlet. He could not have spoken, and no words or act would have been a relief. There was something pitiable in such impotence. Denied—his name a byword—the man was in an agony. Then he rallied—he could not dare—he had written that in the first rush, perhaps had gone, but come back, and forgotten the note. He went outside, took up a small lamp from the hall-table, and went upstairs, the dog following him.

The rooms were empty—he would have known they were empty if he had gone in blindfolded; the lace curtains stirred mournfully in the night wind, blowing through the wide-open windows; a dressing-gown was flung on a chair; a book of devotion lay open on the prayer-desk as it had last been used.

He went out again, closing the door softly, laying his hand for an instant on the key as if he would lock it, but changed his mind, and again entered his study, still with Coln at his side. He took Christine's letter up, seeming about to tear it, but did not—instead, opening his desk and taking from it the faded rosebud he had put there months ago.

All this time the white teeth were set, and the delicate brows knitted. Was he going at last to destroy that flower because Christine had given it—Christine who had risked her name and life? Once more he put it back, because he had promised to keep it—perhaps, too, from a feeling that lay too vague and deep for him to discern then—a clasping of hands with the free spirit that would not brook wrong or subjection.

With the flower he put the letter. Then he tried to think. She would come back—her brother himself would urge her—for of course she had gone there. No girl of nineteen could stand out against the talk of the world. He should not follow her—he should wait. Whatever she had said to the servants—and that he would find out to-morrow—would last for a short while; but if she had not returned by then, those pretences would fall to the ground.

Through all this there was an undercurrent of conviction that she could have acted in no other way after what he had told her, and a sense of relief that he had not to face her just now.

Those accusing, scornful eyes haunted him; he did not want to see them again. Let her go—he did not care so long as there was no scandal—no talk; he cared, save for that, for nothing in Heaven or earth. He was not tamed yet; deeper waters than even these must flow over the stubborn soil that would not give up its shrub; he must suffer a thousand times all he had suffered yet.

Through the night he sat before his desk, with his fair head bowed on his folded arms, and the dog crouched sleepless by his side.

## CHAPTER XVII.

That evening Pelham Clifford sat alone in his well-lighted private room, reading, or rather at the time we see him, he was not reading, but thinking.

Maddie had gone immediately after dinner to see a friend a few doors off; and although she had said she would not be ten minutes, had already been half-an-hour, and was likely to be as long again. So Pelham, eschewing the stately loneliness of the drawing-room, had retreated to his own sanctum and meaning to enjoy the luxury of reading a favourite classic author, was, instead, indulging in the more doubtful luxury of thought. For thought, especially if it is retrospective, is nine times out of ten disagreeable, and Pelham's were decidedly so; for now that his own breach of faith had recoiled on his sister, he regretted it, even though it had given him Maddie. And it must be confessed that at times Maddie, with all her prettiness and sweetness, did not seem altogether a compensation for broken honour, and Christine's unhappiness. Pelham was not distinctly conscious of such a feeling; he would have denied it if charged with it, and

denied it honestly; but there it was. And the woman, whom for such sin has been committed must be a very rare one, indeed, if such a feeling never arises in her husband's heart. Maddie was anything but rare, and so the beginning of the end had come. A voice without—a servant's—roused him.

"Yes, ma'am," said the voice, speaking to someone outside, "she is out, and my master is alone."

The door was opened, and Pelham rose quickly, it must be Christine, for the servants never admitted anyone else to this room.

He stepped forward with an exclamation—"My dearest child, how jolly of you to come, but how late you are!" and paused abruptly as Christine half-flung herself into his arms.

His heart grew cold with a nameless fear; for this passionate clinging to him, this silence, what did it mean? Even while he debated what to say, what to ask, whether to soothe her agitation or to let it have its way, Christine solved his doubts by lifting herself, not calm, but resolute to force herself into some semblance of calm. Yet the white cheek and the over-bright eye looked as if the spirit were too wrought up to keep self-command long. She pulled off her hat and gloves, as if the common-place action were some help in keeping her balance. Clifford looked at her gravely, and also, glancing up, caught his eye. Her lip quivered. She could not unfasten one of the buttons of her glove, and held out her hand to him silently. It was no wonder her fingers failed her, for she was trembling from head to foot. He drew off the glove gently, bending down to her.

"What does it all mean, my little sister?" She stood absolutely still, as if bracing herself up, and then answered him,—

"It means—that I am your sister only once more."

She moved away from him, her cheeks were burning now. Clifford followed her, staying her by his hand on her shoulder.

"What have you been doing, or, rather, what has Delmar been doing to have driven you to this?" he said sternly, "for I cannot misunderstand you. You have left him and come to me to claim the protection and shelter I, as your brother, can give you."

"He will not come here," she said, under her breath.

Clifford fell back. "Why do you say so—what do you know?" he said, with that terrible fear making the blood in his veins like ice. He had overmastered him and put it self into words—words that he would fain have recalled the next minute.

"Has he ever come to this house?" she said, not noticing anything strange either in his question or the manner of it at the time.

"I know the reason now. And if he came, not he, nor even you, could change me. You think me wrong, Pelham—you are terrified at what the world may say. Well, I care nothing for the world—let it judge me. For your blame I do care, but I will endure it rather than go back."

"I do not blame you—I cannot without knowing the whole. I know, I have known for a long time, that you have not been happy. It has been a grief to me that has poisoned every day and night—but I own I do fear my sister's name being thrown from one reckless hand to the other. You have done wisely to come here at once. But tell me all, Christine."

"You have a right to know—something at least—the right of love, if none other. I knew months ago he had never loved me—I thought once he had. I cannot tell you what my life has been—a living death. I have borne it so long, and then I found out—no matter how—I hardly know myself—that he had deceived me. Another—no, not another—for she was the only love—well, she stood between us. He told me to-day."

Clifford had shaded his face with his hands, while in hurried, rapid accents Christine poured out these incoherent words—stopping abruptly here and there, as if it was a hard task to tell her miserable story.

"An old love!" said Pelham, slowly. "Well so many men might plead guilty to that. Is that unpardonable?"

"Oh, no, no!" cried the girl, passionately. "I would have pardoned that. Have I not known it, I tell you, for months? I would have pardoned his falseness, his neglect; all but that one thing. That I will never forgive!"

"What thing?" asked Clifford, startled. "I cannot understand you. My darling,"—and he took her hands in his, forcing her to stand quiet—"think well—a thousand times, before you refuse to return. Think whether you can maintain your position—weigh well what that position is—the hardest, the most equivocal. Is it impossible you two can be reconciled? Only a past love between you? Cannot you, for the sake of your name, sink your pride, just as it is? He does not love you, but he may—your eyes say so. In Heaven's name, child! what do you mean?"

The girl bent her face down on his hands with a long, quivering breath.

"Oh!" she said, "what after misery it is!"

Clifford stood quite still, incapable of speech, or even movement. He was tortured with the very torture he had laid on another man, and the blow he had dealt had fallen on himself. Not a dead love only stood between this cherished sister and her husband—and Christine knew it.

A tangled web it seemed from beginning to end—a web he had begun to weave with very light thought of anything but his own gain and anyone but himself, and other hands had taken the delicate fibres and weaved them as they listed, and drawn them under his feet and Christine's.

"I thought that folly had been forgotten," he said at last, when he could trust his voice. "I never dreamed, when your letter came, that he had not put that away altogether. Oh!" he said, with a bitter remorse she could not fathom then, "what a worse than fool I have been!"

"No, dear Pelham," said the girl, gently. "Why lay blame on yourself? You could not know—you could not but think that he had forgotten. I have pained you, I know. I scarcely know what I said."

"Hush! darling, it does not matter," said Clifford, tenderly. "I cannot have you bear one iota more. But is it this you will never forgive—because it is not a past love?"

"No, no—again no! Even that I would have borne. Must I tell you all? You will understand, then, why to forgive would be such deadly shame." She pressed her hands on her temples in an agony of doubt.

To lower Albert in her brother's eyes—as he had been lowered in her own—she shrank from it ineffably. Yet how else convince Pelham that reconciliation was not to be thought of? She began low and falteringly, afraid to look at her listener,—

"I don't think he was speaking falsely—he believes it all—only he has been mistaken. He said you had come between him and Maddie"—Pelham controlled an exclamation—"and he had sworn revenge."

Clifford broke into a hard laugh.

"Revenge! he is long in taking it!"

"Is he?" said Delmar's wife, looking up.

"Good Heaven!" was all Clifford said, sinking into a chair, and covering his face.

The girl knelt beside him, trying to draw away his hands.

"Pelham—dear Pelham," she whispered, in her sweet winning way, "don't think of me—don't grieve for me. I did not believe it—not for one instant. I knew you could do no such wrong."

"You did not believe it!" repeated Clifford, with an eager, half-incredulous look into the beautiful face. Alas! his faith even in her had been poisoned by his own tarnished faith.

"Then what did you think had parted them?"

"Not Albert," said the girl, dropping her head.

"I thought Maddie—"

"Ah, true," interrupted Maddie's husband,



hurriedly—not willingly, not without a flash of shame; “but there was no blame exactly—love was more on his side than hers—only a girl’s fancy, you know, and so I—” He dared not add the lie. “I, knowing nothing, won her—” not with force, trusting eyes on his face, not with the light touch of the clasped hands on his knee. He bent his head down on hers, and Christine, nestling to him, thought she understood all that was in his heart as clearly as she did her own—and her own was only half-comprehended.

“So you see, I cannot go back,” she whispered, after that silence.

“No!”

“You will not tell Maddie?”

Again—“No!”

Maddie’s high treble in the hall, and Delmar’s young wife sprang to her feet, half wildly.

“Oh! don’t let her come,” she said, scarcely knowing what she uttered—“not to-night!”

“She never comes here, dear,” said Pelham, soothing her. “My poor child—you are overtaxed—you must rest. Did you come alone, or with Fanny? Then I will send her to you; only first you must have some refreshment.”

“No,” said the girl, stopping him as he went to the hall. “I cannot—it would choke me. I will go up to my own room; and to-morrow I will see Maddie.” Then she came to him, and put her soft arms about him, clinging to him. “Oh, Pelham, you won’t let this change us—you said? I will try to love her—for your sake.”

“My own Christine, nothing—nothing shall make us less to each other,” was Clifford’s answer, as he kissed her again and again; and as she went from the room he thanked Heaven that the peril was past; and there flashed into his mind the unbidden thought, “Is Maddie’s love worth the loss of hers?”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Clifford did not immediately seek his wife. There was an instinctive shrinking from the unsympathetic nature, not meant for the tragedies of life. But as tragedies of some sort come into so many lives, women like Maddie naturally are not turned to for help or sympathy when they occur. Besides, there was another and lower feeling actuating him. Maddie seemed the very beginner of what Christine had truly called “utter misery.” He was too overwhelmed to be as just as a man should be—if one is to take men’s view of the gifts of their sex. He laid blame on himself, true, but a great deal on her also—he, who had told her that she did no wrong in breaking her troth!

Delmar’s mode of revenge had certainly been well chosen. The man who had injured him was touched in his most vulnerable points—his dearest and best was wounded, and his own dishonour stared him mockingly in the face.

So much had come out Christine had never been meant to know, he thought, in terror; what was to prevent her knowing the whole truth to-day? He was but staying off that day by the lies he had uttered—by his mean sheltering under Maddie’s sin.

“It is all cursed folly and wretchedness, from beginning to end!” he said, finishing his soliloquy aloud. “Who would have thought the fellow had such a black heart under that fair face of his—to hold his hand, to say not one word of reproach—to go out of our lives as if he were dead—and then to silently work out this revenge! I always hated him—he was always before me. I would give all I possess if my hands were not so tied! No wonder he wanted no delay in the marriage.” He stopped and listened. “Fest! there is Maddie!”

Poor Maddie! He had never wished her anywhere else till now. She came running downstairs—what should make her feet ever go wearily?—and opened the door of the study.

“Pelham—aren’t you coming up? I’ve got such a lot to tell you.”

“Don’t worry me now, Maddie,” said he, irritably.

“Dear me—what is the matter?” said she, advancing into the room. “Has your valet given you warning?” Clifford turned from her impatiently. Her frivolity seemed intolerable, and he felt savage—unjustly, of course.

“Why,” said Maddie, picking up a glove from the floor, “whose is this?—not mine. I never put on my gloves here.”

“It’s Christine’s,” said Pelham, abruptly. “She is here.”

“Christine! and gone again? I am so sorry I have missed her.”

The genuine feeling diminished his vexation. He spoke and looked more like himself as he told Maddie briefly of what had happened, assigning no reason for Christine’s act save the want of affection.

Maddie listened in surprise, and was sincerely sorry, in spite of the little throb of something very like satisfaction. It had not escaped her that in Pelham’s tone, when speaking of Delmar, there was unusual bitterness, and she drew her own conclusions from it. There was something not altogether unpleasant in feeling she had such power.

“But she’ll have to go back,” said she. Perhaps she might act as the generous mediator between the man who had been her lover and his wife—whom he could not love; magnanimously persuade him to be reconciled to the wife who had no power, and then do a little of the “Bless ye, my children.” It looked so pretty. “She can’t stand out against everyone!”

“No one will attempt to persuade her to return,” said Pelham, annoyed at Maddie’s tone.

“Then I shall. Of course it’s all nonsense about the reason. She wouldn’t have rushed away like that without some overt provocation,” said Maddie, shrewdly. Really, it would be rather awkward meeting Christine. It was a pity Delmar had ever come into the family.

“He’d give her plenty, I daresay,” said Clifford, with a sneer, trying to turn her aside from the point.

“No,” said Maddie, coolly. “I believe aunts are prejudiced. Albert wasn’t the sinner she tried to make him out.”

“Let him alone, for Heaven’s sake! I hate the sound of his name!” said Clifford, angrily.

Her eyes sparkled.

“What for? I expect Christine has taken offence at something, and he’s not so much to blame. When the storm has blown over they can be good friends again. I’m sure I’d do anything I could to help them.”

“You! the last person under the sun! Christine has not been hasty, as you imply. It is Delmar’s fault—curse him!”

“Pelham!”

“I beg your pardon a thousand times,” said Clifford. “Christine shall never go back to him with my consent.”

“How wildly you talk, Pelham! What do you imagine people will say? You really ought to use your influence as her brother; or, perhaps, I—”

“Might use your influence with Albert, I suppose?”

“Well,” said she, serene in proportion to his rising temper, “of course there is no denying, I used to be able to do a good deal with him; and whatever influence I have now I am sure there would be no harm in using for such a good end.”

“He is not coming near you—understand that; and you are not to say a word to Christine about the subject. The child shall have some protection. I won’t have her worried—some of you women can never give up your power.”

Maddie drew herself up with an offended air, much mitigated by her husband’s angry acknowledgment of a pleasing fact.

But he had never before spoken to her like this; and she was not grateful to the innocent

cause of it, though her jealousy of her had cooled in the last half-hour, and she thought of her as “poor” Christine.

“You needn’t be angry,” said she; “I think it is I who ought to be angry, for I can see you and Christine have the real secret between you; she hasn’t left him only because he doesn’t love her. She has found something out, and has just rushed off; for she is impetuous, in spite of her appearing calm.”

“Do let her alone, Maddie—you’re no more help to a man at a time like this than a baby!” exclaimed Clifford, driven to desperation.

“You had better get help from Christine, then—she is so much wiser than I am,” said Maddie, freezing. “and you think so much more of her. You worry over her and her troubles till you almost forget that I need some attention.”

“I can love two people, Maddie,” said Clifford, a little startled by her evident observation of his recent abstracted moods.

“It seems not—but it doesn’t matter,” with an injured martyr air. “It isn’t my fault that she doesn’t understand Albert—but of course, poor darling, I shall say nothing to her.”

“Understand him!” exclaimed Clifford.

“I told you it was not her doing, Maddie. Why will you persist in that wrong-headed way! You might help me if you chose, if it were but a word of sympathy! It seems as if it were for my sin my darling is suffering!”

“Sin!” repeated Maddie, growing pale.

“Cannot you see—understand? It was for you—but I did wrong him!”

“And yet you told me I did no wrong,” said Maddie, looking at him steadily. “It was I, then, who thought of Albert—you, who said it was best as it was! But now you positively regret it!”

Clifford, who had flung himself into a chair, sprang up.

“No, Maddie! I did not mean that—I never said it. Regret it! no, a thousand times. We are both foolish to quarrel when we need all the aid one can give the other. Be my own sweet Maddie again; and be very kind to Christine, for my sake. Sometimes I fancy you two have not been all I could wish.”

Maddie flushed up and played with the chain at her belt. She made no movement towards her husband—he had rather undone himself by that appeal for his sister; but he came to her side, and pleaded, and praised, and coaxed till Maddie thought it time to allow her offended dignity to be appeased, and looked like another person when she whispered, so penitently, she was sorry, and glanced up under her lashes in the true coquettish style. It was a very pretty scene, this making up of a quarrel that might have been harmless had they been lovers.

Maddie’s ready tears made her bright eyes look charming, but a little seed bedded itself in her heart that might bear evil fruit.

And Clifford felt that her proper vocation was to be petted and kissed, and that in the crises of his life he must stand alone—save for Christine. It was not a pleasant thought, but it did not leave him.

The meeting between the two sisters went off very well.

It had cost Christine a great deal to come forward smiling and kiss Maddie affectionately, as she had been used to do.

The night had been sleepless to her—a long, wretched waiting for the tardy dawn, and as it stole into her room and met her wide, tired, wakeful eyes the thought of this meeting with Maddie grew too heavy to be borne.

There was so much in the wife’s heart to be wrestled with and subdued before she dared meet the woman who held all she coveted; and then, as she clasped her hand, her eyes searched the pretty face wistfully.

What power had she, where was it enshrined, to hold such undying love? How was it she could not see it or feel it?

Maddie behaved well. If Christine felt an over-kindness in her greeting—a something which repelled and chafed—Maddie was quite



[IN BITTEREST GRIEF.]

unconscious of it. She did her best to be herself. She made no allusion to the cause of Christine's presence there, and talked on indifferent subjects at the breakfast-table. She talked a little overpoweringly, but with the amiable intention of performing that disagreeable operation called "cheering up."

Christine found it devolved on her to keep up the ball with Maddie—Clifford was silent and gloomy.

The day passed heavily. Christine denied herself to all visitors, and to avoid them sat in Pelham's study.

Here Maddie fluttered from time to time, very kind and hospitable, bent on making her young sister at home, when all the poor child wanted was to be let alone.

She had never meant to stay here—she had seen enough in her constant visits to be aware that Maddie was jealous of her—and now doubly jealous.

At no time would a prolonged residence be advisable—under present circumstances it was impossible.

She bore it bravely for a few days—then she announced her intention of going out for the morning.

"You have come away in such a hurry," said Maddie, "of course you must want some things?"

"I am not going shopping," said the girl, wincing at the tone. "I am going to look for apartments."

"What!" exclaimed Pelham, and Maddie protested, secretly pleased. "Nonsense," he went on, "I won't have it, Christine."

She only gave him a look which silenced him, and asked Maddie to come with her.

She had a double motive here. She wanted the weight of Maddie's presence—for Mrs. Clifford looked the young matron fully, and Christine was conscious she had not herself the least appearance of married staidness; and then she knew Maddie's soul delighted in

house-hunting, and she was pleased to be able to show she had no ill-feeling.

They came back to luncheon, and Pelham heard with displeasure that Christine had taken some pretty and quiet rooms a few streets off, to which she proposed moving on the morrow.

Pelham made no comment, but catching his sister alone, later, he opened, abruptly,—

"Christine, I don't like this, and I'm very angry with Maddie for encouraging it."

"No, you mustn't be angry, Pel, dear—not with her, it is my fault, not hers."

"Yours!" said Pelham, but his vexation melted as he looked at the pleading face. He took it between his hands and kissed it. "I understand your side of it," he said, "but it seems hard. I would give anything to keep you. Are you afraid of Albert coming here?"

"Partly—not that I think he would," said Christine.

"You'll not let him know where you are?"

"No—not now, at any rate."

The next evening saw Christine and Fanny installed in the new home.

It had been a painful but necessary duty to tell some of the truth to the faithful maid, who listened to her mistress with the well-bred servant's passivity, and only showed what she felt by a more than ever careful attention.

She had seen that the life at Daneswood was not what it should be, and thought much more of her mistress than of her master.

Christine felt intensely relieved away from Maddie's presence; but how lonely it was!

It grew on her like something visible, coming upon her step by step. A terrible depression laid hold of her. She had full leisure for thought—to look back to the might have been, to look forward and see no light; to wonder what Albert had felt and what he would do; to hope she would never see him again, and yet to feel a longing that made her heart ache; to recall every word and look of the last day at home, to feel her burn-

ing indignation deepen with the recollection, and the love that had been part of her being grow cold and dead.

If only Colin were here, she thought, she could bear the solitude. She loved him dearly, and he must be unhappy without her.

She felt the hot tears in her eyes—poor, lonely, unhappy child, whose heart and soul were wrung almost beyond her strength.

If Albert Delmar had seen her that night, crouching on the floor, with her head pillowed on a low chair, the young face quiet at last in the half-dreamy sleep of exhaustion, would he not have seen what work he had done, and despair that he could ever undo it?

(To be continued.)

**CHOOSING A HUSBAND.**—Choose a busy man for a husband—one who has plenty to occupy his mind and to talk about. It is the man with many interests, with engrossing occupation, with plenty of people to fight, with a struggle to maintain himself against the world, who is the real domestic man, in the wife's sense; who enjoys home, who is tempted to make a friend of his wife, who relishes prattle, who feels in the home circle, where nobody is above him, as if he were in a haven of ease and relaxation. The drawback of home life, its containing possibilities of insipidity, sameness and consequent weariness is never present to such a man. He no more tires of his wife and children than of his own happier moods. He is no more bored with home than with sleep. All the monotony and weariness of life he encounters outside. It is the pleasure-loving man, the merry companion, who requires constant excitement, that finds home-life unendurable. He soon grows weary of it, and considers everything so tame that it is impossible for him to be happy, or not to feel that he is less unhappy there than elsewhere.





["DO YOU INTEND TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS ENGAGEMENT, LEIGH?" THE YOUNG MAN SAID, GRAVELY.]

NOVELETTE.]

## AGAINST HIS WILL.

### CHAPTER I.

PETRUCHIO AND KATE.

A PALE, eager-eyed young man, with no pretensions to beauty, and a girl, handsome and stormy-browed. To whom the young man: "You are very handsome, but exceedingly ill-tempered."

"And you are both disagreeable and rude!" coolly. "Most folks are who speak the truth, advantage of physical beauty? Candidly, I am disappointed in you, Leigh!"

"Candidly, I don't care two straws about your opinion!"

"I think you do."

"Supposing, to avoid argument, I admit I do—why are you disappointed? Am I not handsome?" with a furtive glance into an opposite mirror.

"I have said you are. If you were but as sweet and good as you are beautiful you would be—"

"An angel?" scoffingly.

"No, a perfect woman. Angels would be out of place on earth."

"I hate perfection! First, you dislike my temper—what next?"

"Your insatiable coquetry."

"Thank you."

"When I saw you last you were a frank, truthful girl of fifteen; quite above the follies of small-minded women. You gave promise of a splendid development—that is four years ago; and instead of advancing, as I hoped you would, you have retreated from, my standard of womanly worth!"

The girl's face crimsoned, as she sits opposite to him in the summer-house; but she bites her lip fiercely to keep back the passionate words; when she dare speak her voice sounds a little choked.

"I suppose, were I like Effie, I should win your approbation?"

He smiles amusedly.

"It would not do if all were Effies!"

She leans forward.

"I'd rather be myself than Effie Roby!" she says, emphatically. "I think she is but a pretty, brainless doll!"

"Opinions differ," the young man remarks, quietly, apparently not resenting the insult to his sister; and Leigh Banks looks and feels annoyed that her shot has fallen harmless. She waits with fierce impatience for him to speak.

"You are guilty of innumerable follies."

"Who has been your informant, my self-appointed mentor?"

"I decline to tell!"—laughing outright at her ill-concealed rage. "And now, to crown all your other errors, you are going to marry Francis Conway! Why should you do this?"

"Why should I not?"

"He is very small, and you hate small men."

"I have told him so often."

"He is terribly nervous!"

"Consequently most easily suppressed."

"You will make him miserable."

"There is no doubt of that!"

"He will be a puppet in your hands."

"He is that already. Have you any further objections to make to our marriage?"

"Yes," smiling amusedly. "Conway is already bald."

"Fortunate for him, since you say I am a shrew," and the girl breaks into a perfect ripple of laughter.

But Justin Roby asked, gravely,—

"Do you intend to go through with this engagement, Leigh?" the young man said, gravely.

"Yes," growing serious. "You have given reasons why I should not marry Francis, I will supply you with reasons why I should."

"Go on."

"He is docile, will obey me, instead of striving to bend my will to his. I love docile men. He never bores one with 'talkie-talkie,' he is so deliciously stupid he can't talk; I like stupidity. And, oh! above and beyond all, he is immensely rich; and I adore wealth."

Justin rises with a gesture of disgust.

"Are these your real sentiments?"

"Yes!" recklessly.

"Then I can only say they are unworthy any woman; entertaining such ideas you will doubtless act upon them, and be as happy as you deserve to be."

He turns to go, disappointed, disgusted; he who of all she knows alone dare chide her. Even in her anger and dismay she feels he is her only true friend, and she is losing him.

With a mighty effort she puts aside her pride.

"Justin," she pleads, "don't be vexed with me." Then as she sees the condemnation still in his eyes, she adds, "Perhaps I did not quite mean all I said."

"I hope you did not," very gravely. "Is it presumption to ask if you have the remotest idea of love for Conway? You have not; I see it in your eyes. I am sorry for you, Leigh."

She does not speak, but taps the table again and again, all the while looking from him.

"What led you into such a very foolish engagement? You can't expect any good to come of it."

"Why not?" with a short laugh. "I shall at least be my own mistress. I shall escape from the eternal bickerings and storms of this hateful home. Men say there is no place like home—most true, there is no place so detestable!" her eyes flash, and her cheeks flame into colour. "Justin, you force me to confide in you. I am very, very miserable, and there is no way of escaping from my misery but by marrying a rich man; and very few rich men would be willing to marry the Reverend Cyril Banks's portionless daughter. You look surprised; it is quite true. I have not a penny;

he has spent all he ever had, and there is nothing but the living now."

"Leigh!"

"Still he has his hounds, his horses. I have mine. I mean the horse, because he wills it so; but bankruptcy is close at hand. We do not retrench, and should the worst come, why, having Francis Conway for a son, he will fear nothing. Another case of the unjust steward."

"You poor child!"

"Don't pity me. I have allowed myself to be bullied into an engagement I loathe, and deserve whatever may come. I don't pity myself, and most certainly not Mr. Conway; for he knows he is distasteful to me, and yet persists in his determination to marry me."

"Poor wretch! You have bewitched him!"

"Curious," she says, musingly. "I never remember speaking kindly to him. The more I see him the better he likes me."

"If he turned land suppliant you, I believe there would be some hope for him."

"He'll never do that, so his case is utterly hopeless," laughing bitterly. "What would you do were you he?"

"Not as he does, decidedly. I would subject you to a course of rigorous treatment."

"You would develop into a wife-batterer?"

"No. I should draw a line at the flogging, I think; but it would depend very much upon your conduct towards me."

"You are amusing!" she cried, with an assumption of gaiety. "Have I been sentimental? If so forget it; usually I am at sentiment. And now I most dismiss you; my horse is waiting, and Mr. Conway is already in sight."

"We will discuss the matter in hand at some time, not far distant, I hope."

Leigh grimaces harshly.

"I've listened patiently to one sermon; I think another would be my death!"

Justin smiles a slow, peculiar smile, and, taking his hat, prepares to go.

"Good-bye," he says, quietly. "I know you will think of my words, and can only trust they may turn you from your present line of conduct."

She only lays her finger-tips in his broad palm, scarce vouchsafing him "good-morning," as he passes out.

Then she rises and hastens from the summer-house in which they had been talking towards the house, in front of which stands a glossy brown mare, from which dismounts a small, colourless man, who advances to Miss Banks, hat in hand.

"Pray don't stand uncovered; you'll take cold," says his lady-love, with a pointed look at his bald head.

He hastens to obey, in an abashed way, then sends his horse away by his groom, and the two start for a walk.

"Did I not see Justin Roby as I came through the avenue?"

"Probably. He has been with me an hour, I believe."

"Another admirer," the young man mutters, venturing to glance into Leigh's face. To his surprise it is not scornful, but thoughtful.

"No, not an admirer. He candidly told me I was abominably ill-tempered; that he was disappointed in me—oh! and a score of other things equally unpleasant."

"It was very impudent of him," says Mr. Conway—the faintest tinge of pink colouring his "sugar-paper" complexion—"and—and uncalled for."

"You might say unexpected!" laughs Leigh, bitterly. "I am so accustomed to flattery that I felt suppressed. I think the truth is always unpleasant."

"Do you?"

"Yes. Would you care to hear what else he said?"

"If you like telling me."

"He told me if you married me I should make you miserable."

"It was false!" the little man cries, almost fiercely. "Why should you not marry me?"

"Because," she says, pitilessly, "you are small, and I hate small men; you are nervous, and I shall suppress you at every available opportunity; and lastly, because,—"

"You have no wool on top of your head just where the wool ought to grow."

"He might have been generous enough to let me stand my chance. He might have seen you. You do not care for me; and yet, Leigh, I love you very much—I do, upon my word!"

"I believe you do," shouted by his earnestness—the stammering, simple speech goes home to her heart. "I don't believe it if you did not. I shall make you most miserable."

"I am willing to run the risk."

"Why do you love me?"—asking him. "Is it because I am beautiful?"

"Partly."

"And for what else?"

"I—I hardly know."

"I treat everyone with more consideration than you. I give you more than half-pence."

"I don't mind the kicks."

"Not just yet, because you've had the half-pence all your life previously; but you'll get tired of kicks when they are your food and drink, the reward of your devotion day and night."

He is silent, not knowing what to say.

"You won't be able to retaliate even if you dare, because you are so stupid."

"I know I am. But, Leigh—you can't mean to—to hit me?"

"Not just yet, Fanny," mockingly.

When she wishes to tease she invariably calls him "Fanny," knowing it is gall and wormwood to him.

"I am afraid I couldn't stand it," he says, nervously.

"I shall marry you," she says, slowly, "because I must. The idea of beggary is very unsavoury to me."

"Perhaps in]time you will—like me a little."

"Perhaps so. Who knows? At least, I have not deceived you. I have always told you plainly I do not love you."

"You have," ruefully.

"You are, you are not in the least my ideal young man. You seem to have been born old—a serious drawback in my eyes."

Francis maintains a strict silence, really because he has nothing to say, and presently Leigh asks,—

"Why did you not discover an attachment for Effie Roby. She is gentle, pretty, has a little fortune, and, I believe, does not dislike you?"

"She is a nice girl, but she is not you."

"A very obvious fact," says Miss Banks, with uplifted head; "but she is just the type of woman most men desire for their wives. You are in a shameful minority, Fanny."

"I am content to be so."

Then they walk some time in silence, and Conway ventures now and again to glance into the thoughtful face of his handsome betrothed.

Presently she turns to him.

"There is one chance left for you—will you take it? If you feel you have made a mistake in asking me to be your wife, I will forget we ever were engaged. Think, Francis! almost pleadingly, "what a life spent with me means! If you wish for freedom I give it you now."

"You are a kind little soul, and I don't want to spoil your life." But he breaks in hurriedly, "I don't want my freedom—I won't take it."

The reins fall loosely about her horse's neck.

"As you please," she says, callously. "Whatever comes you have but yourself to blame."

"I know that well."

"If I prove a Kantippe, you will remember you would marry me against my inclination, and will consequently regard my shrewishness with lenient eyes."

He lays his hand upon hers, but she flings it aside passionately.

"Don't touch me!" she cries, "not now."

"I am in one of my 'moods.'"

From long experience he knows her "moods" are very terrible, and draws reluctantly from her.

She does not vouchsafe him another word until they come to a lonely bit of road, with no one in view but a fair-haired, fair-faced girl.

"Here is Effie," Miss Banks says. "Does she not walk gracefully? and she is really very pretty. It would not be a bad exchange, Fanny," and, drawing near Miss Roby, she stops to speak to her.

"Your brother has called upon me at last, Effie. I thought he had forgotten me."

"Justin never forgets old friends," the girl answers, lifting shy, blue eyes to Conway.

"He is altogether a wonderful specimen of mankind," says Leigh, sneeringly.

And Effie, not noticing the sneer, replies,— "Papa and I know he is, and value him accordingly."

"Does not your unlimited admiration make him vain and self-opinionated?"

"Oh, no; he has a very low opinion of himself."

"That is a rare thing in a man."

"Is it? I have not noticed it particularly."

"I should say not," with a half-contemptuous glance at the pretty face and dainty figure.

Then Francis, who has scrupulously maintained silence, advances to the fore.

"We intend riding to Elverton to-morrow, Miss Roby. If you care to join our party 'Gypsy' is at your command."

"Thank you. I should like it very much."

"I will send her round at eleven; we start at eleven-fifteen."

"You are very kind, Mr. Conway."

"Not at all—I beg you won't thank me."

Then the engaged pair bow, smile and walk away, whilst Effie Roby, on the way home, thinks much of them, and when she enters the pretty little parlour, finding Justin alone she questions, "Why do you admire Leigh Banks?"

"She is very handsome."

"Do you think so? I don't like dark women—and she looks like a termagant."

He smiles sarcastically. "She thinks you a pretty doll."

"Did she tell you so, Justin," with a flush of anger.

"Yes."

"I cannot compliment her on her good taste."

"How you women love each other!"

"But seriously, Justin, do you admire Leigh's character?"

"Not in its present state of development, but it could be moulded into perfection—so far as earthly perfection goes."

"I always thought you preferred gentlewomen?" plaintively.

"With blue eyes and fair hair?" maliciously.

Effie regards him curiously a moment, then seeing no mischief in his eyes, no shadow of a smile about his mouth, says "I really think that fair women are, as a rule, sweeter in disposition than dark—I may say it without being accused of conceit. Look for a moment at Annie and Nellie Taylor."

"Amiable idiots. Have you any other examples to give of sweetness?"

Rather crestfallen, Effie says, "Yes, Mrs. Banks."

"A querulous, faded beauty."

"You are very unjust—perhaps you will deny that cousin Ida is gentle and good!"

"Not at all, but I think she has a fair share of worldly wisdom," and the young man's face flushes slightly. Years ago there had been tender passages between "cousin Ida" and he, but the girl had chosen to marry a wealthy Anglo-Indian in preference to Justin Roby, son of the retired naval officer. The youth quickly outgrew his passion, and now could afford to laugh at it as a summer dream, and was thankful it had had so untimely an end.

"Effie," he says, in a not unkindly tone, "I am afraid you are jealous of Miss Banks."



"Not in the least. I have heard her spoken of as 'fast and unladylike.' She is not that."

"Perhaps you have only seen her good side—and I know a great many folks who do not think her in the least handsome."

"Tastes differ, Effie, and sometimes the grapes are sour."

"Can you say she is not a vixen?"

"Perhaps not—but if she is, Kate, were a Petruchio forthcoming, he would teach her submission, and she would learn right easily." But Effie coughs dubiously.

## CHAPTER II.

### TWO-EDGED TOOLS.

CYRIL BANKS, rector of Barworth, is not at all a man to be admired; he is of that school of clerics happily fast dying out—a man who, preaching twice on Sundays, considers he has done his duty towards his parish, who hunts, drinks, and gambles with the choicest spirits round him.

Years ago he had squandered his fortune, and had been glad to accept the really good living of Barworth at the hands of his father's old friend, Henry Dallworth, Earl of Barworth.

Then he married Cissy Liancourt, a great heiress, and for awhile all appeared well with him; but he wasted the wealth she brought him, and grew weary of her, hated the restraint his profession imposed upon him; and as their child gradually blossomed into a beautiful girl built all his hopes of future ease upon her.

She must marry well, for he had well nigh come to the length of his tether. His creditors clamoured loudly for what was so rightfully theirs, and he knew not which way to turn. So he struggled on, just keeping his head above water, and then—oh, joy!—a wealthy suitor for Leigh's hand appeared—none other than Mr. Conway.

The girl had rejected more than one lover, and borne the burden of her father's anger, her mother's querulous reproaches, and it seemed extremely probable she would send this "old young man" away in disdain.

So Cyril Banks stated his affairs clearly to his child, advising her to be reasonable, and she had finally accepted Conway, to the mutual satisfaction of her parents.

The engagement is now of three months' standing, and the rector is growing impatient of delay, and constantly urges Conway to plead for a speedy marriage.

Conway promises all that is demanded of him, but when face to face with his handsome fiancée dare not so much as mention the subject of her appointment in his thoughts.

He fancies he sees the clear olive skin flash, the dark eyes blaze with scorn. He knows just how she would look; and sometimes her expression reminds him almost unpleasantly of the rector's in his most diabolical rages. Yes, she is certainly like her father.

He helps Cyril Banks in a delicate way, asking no thanks, and receiving none, for the rector knows nothing of gratitude, not even its barest rudiments.

On a clear, frosty morning Leigh rides with him to a meet. She is looking very handsome, and Conway is proportionately proud of her.

He likes to note the admiring glances that follow her; but he feels many a jealous fear when young men, bolder, freer of speech than he, join them, and chatting gaily to Leigh, forget or ignore his very existence.

Justin Roby is present, a friend having given him a mount; but after lifting his hat he apparently forgets all about Miss Banks, who is not a little piqued by his conduct, although she will not confess it even to her own heart.

She knows he hates the faintest suspicion of flirtation; consequently she commences a violent one with a handsome but black man of thirty, who willingly responds.

More miserable each moment grows Conway's face, and some of the spectators cannot forbear to laugh; but a frank young fellow remarks to Justin,—

"That girl treats poor Conway worse than a dog; he must be a fool to stand her nonsense. By Jove, I pity him if ever he marries her!"

"He will do it with his eyes open," coolly.

"I can't see he deserves any pity."

"Poor wretch! he always was a little—shall I say 'soft'?"

"I think that word will do as well as any other."

Then a jovial-looking man of forty, "wearing the pink," rides up.

"Conway deserves to be crushed for presuming to make love to Miss Banks. How mean he is beside her!"

"You see," laughs Justin to his first companion, "there are two sides to the question."

Later on Leigh sends him a message by Conway that she wishes to speak with him, and he returns answer "he will come at his earliest convenience."

She bites her lip and flushes with mortification; it is quite a new thing for her to find all men are not her unquestioning vassals. She had meant to bring him to her side to coquette with him, to show him she could be gentle and pleasant in ways and words.

To further her object she has professed a desire to consult him concerning an amateur concert, at which each will assist, and he has returned answer "he will come at his earliest convenience."

She turns her horse's head towards home.

"Let us go, Fanny; there is nothing more to see."

"I did my best to compel Roby to return with me; it is not my fault he refused," Conway says, timorously. "Are you very angry?"

"No. Why should I care whether he came or not? How stupid you are!"

"I did not believe he could behave so ungraciously—your word to me is law."

"A great deal too much so. And now don't speak again, I am tired of talking—tired of everything," and she breaks into a gallop.

The colour comes into her lovely face, a light of determination into her eyes. She has already resolved to punish Justin for his indifference to her wishes, his openly expressed disapprobation of her conduct. Oh! she will be so gracious, so winsome, that he shall gradually learn to think his judgment too hasty—will, step by step, draw nearer to her—will learn first to admire and then to love her. She does not doubt her ability to compass this end, and when she has won him, extorted from him a confession of his passion, she will cast him aside with high disdain. She never for a moment reflects on the danger she herself may incur in her careless handling of two-edged tools, of the possibility that she may lose her own heart, and cast aside any chance of happiness that may be hers.

She suddenly turns to Conway, her face bright, her eyes kindly.

"I haven't been good to you, to-day, Francis, why don't you bully me? Most men would."

"I'm afraid I'm unlike most men."

"You are, because of your generosity and willingness to forgive."

A pleasurable tinge of colour flits over his cheeks and brow at her gracious words.

"What a pity it is you don't sing, Fanny," her mind reverting to the coming concert.

"I am compelled, in consequence, to accept Mr. Roby as my second in 'The Bridal Duet.'"

"You speak as though you dislike him," he says, half-eagerly.

"So I do—I think he is conceited, and abominably priggish."

Oh! Leigh, Leigh! mendacious Leigh!

The next day, at rehearsal, Justin saunters leisurely towards her.

"Conway told me yesterday you wished to see me, Leigh."

He offers no excuse for his tardy coming, and she finds it hard to be gracious to him, but she succeeds in her attempt.

"I should not have troubled you, seeing you were engaged with old friends, and I had nothing of importance to ask."

"What was it?"

"It was such a trivial question that I have already forgotten it."

"Really and truly?"

"Really and truly. Shall we run through the duet? It is expected of us."

"By all means. Let us get it over as quickly as possible. I have an engagement at twelve; it is not far off that hour."

So he is anxious to be gone! Her face flushes angrily, but her voice is low and soft as she says,—

"We will begin at once, if you choose. Effie, will you accompany us?"

"I am a wretched accompanist," murmurs Effie; "I am afraid my share in the performance will disgust all."

But she sits down, and plays the prelude with a flourish, Leigh muttering meanwhile,—

"Little hypocrite—she knows she plays better than any girl in the room."

So soon as the last notes are sung Justin leaves her side, and joins some girls at the opposite end of the room, watching, covertly, for some sign of wounded vanity in Leigh. But her manner towards Effie is gracious and sweet, her face sunny; and, knowing well (as he thinks) her love, almost her command of admiration, he is surprised.

"She must be awfully indifferent to me," he thinks, with pique, "or I have misjudged her. How beautiful she is in her better moods! I don't wonder at Conway's infatuation."

Then, taking his hat, he wishes his fair companions "Good-morning!" and, bowing to Leigh, disappears.

"Is he quite infallible?" she questions, in her heart, and goes home in an exceedingly irate mood, but does not waver in her intention to bring him to her feet. "I wonder how he will look posing as a 'love-lorn suitor'?" she laughs; "for he *shall* love me, and tell me of his love!"

The concert draws nearer, and many are the rehearsals both Leigh and Justin attend; and her smile is so sweet, her words so kindly, so unaffected, that Justin half forgets the restraint he has imposed upon himself, and lingers somewhat oftener beside her. Some who have suffered from her wiles wonder what game she is playing, and marvel at Justin's apparent indifference, and Conway grows uneasy. Leigh is the only one who appears unconscious of any new, strange element in her life—she treats all around with sweet graciousness, rarely flashing into one of her old rages.

One day, returning from rehearsal, Justin overtakes her. She turns with a smile to him, and he says hastily, "I'm afraid I haven't been much of a friend lately, Miss Banks?"

A curious smile plays about her lips at his new style of address, but she says quietly, "There is little time for friendship in a life like mine."

"You mean you did not notice any great difference in me?"

"You are right. I have seen you rarely alone lately, but knowing the many claims upon you I felt no surprise."

"I have been busy—first with social, secondly with journalistic duties."

"I quite envy your active life."

"Why? Is not yours active. You ride, row, skate!"

"All pleasure; work and I are not even acquaintances."

There is a little pause, then Justin says almost awkwardly, "Have you ever given a thought to what I said in our last conversation?"

"Yes," colouring furiously.

"And you acknowledged I was right?"

"Yes," again with a perfect assumption of meekness.

"Will you not act worthily? Remember what you owe to yourself."

"I want to do right," she answers, with lowered lids; "but it is hard."

"If you loved any other I don't think it would be hard for you to throw everything to the winds, save your love only."

"But I do not love, I probably never shall. I am miserably selfish, and care only for the good things of life. Don't you hate and despise me?"

"I do neither," earnestly; "for I see the struggle of your soul and pity you."

"Why?" almost sharply; "I am young, beautiful, courted—shall one day be rich."

"But you are unhappy—riches and rank will never satisfy you," he answers, eagerly.

"Once you thought they would. Why do you now hold a contrary opinion?"

"I was a fool and presumptuous; I did not read you aright."

"Tell me," she says, bending towards him, "how do you read me now?"

"You are reckless, being made so by miserable home-influences, and pretend to heartlessness. You have plighted your word to Conway, to escape from your unhappy surroundings and the continual reproaches of your parents. You are fond of admiration, partly because you cannot have love; but, on the other hand, you are true and brave, would scorn a lie, and if once you loved would stand by the favoured one in all and through all."

"You are more charitable to me now than a few weeks since!"

"Say I am more discriminating."

He is so near her now that he can touch her. As she turns towards him he realises suddenly how very lovable she is; for her face is soft, her eyes kindly, and when she speaks her voice is half-tender, wholly mournful.

"I wish I deserved your leniency, Justin," with well-affected shyness; "will you not be my friend still?"

"Yes," as his fingers grasp hers. "Heaven forbid I should ever be false to my word."

"You will tell me when I go astray? I shall not be angry. You will advise me, and never quite forget how like brother and sister we were in the old days?"

"I will do anything, remember anything you desire," his voice full of eager acquiescence.

She averts her face, and a flush of triumph spreads over it, and a smile hovers about her lips.

At the rectory gates she pauses.

"I am fully engaged to-day, and will not ask you to come in, but to-morrow we shall be glad to see you."

"Thank you. Good-bye. Is it still to be Leigh?"

"Oh yes; never Miss Banks to you," and, bowing, leaves him. Alone, she turns, follows his retreating figure with bright eyes. "It is coming," she whispers, gleefully. "One day he will love me too well for his own peace," and foolishly asks no questions of her own heart.

Day by day she sees more of Justin Roby, the brilliant young journalist, now recruiting his strength in his native village. Day by day she receives some fresh evidence of his friendship, and sometimes she shrinks fearfully from the thought of what his love may be—ay, and his scorn—and wonders why.

She loathes the prospect of her not far distant marriage, grows more intolerant of Francis, and recognizes sorrowfully that she has flung away all chance of happiness, and bitterly resents the burden laid upon her.

Mr. Banks often remonstrates with his daughter, but all to no purpose; and one day, being greatly irritated, says, rudely,—

"Conway is a fool to have anything to do with you!"

"So I think. Few men in his position would be willing to marry the daughter of an impecunious parson."

He glowers upon her, but she meets his angry eyes boldly.

"Don't let us quarrel," she says, in her low, quick tones. "Remember your prosperity depends on me."

"You threaten me?"

"You are too wise to render threats neces-

sary, and you know what I am capable of in a fit of rage."

"I know you are an ungovernable fool."

"Like father, like daughter, my dear," and such a look of rage is in her eyes that Cyril Banks refrains from saying more.

At length the night of the concert comes. It is given for a charitable purpose, and the room is crowded; a number of seats having been reserved for the poorer people.

The glee company is grouped upon a platform, and Effie Roby, who is the accompanist, elicits much admiration by the brilliant way in which she executes the opening overture. Next on the programme is a song, "Tender and True," by Leigh Banks, who does not appear until the last notes of the overture have died away. There is a little pause, during which Justin, who is of the glee company, looks expectantly towards the door at the far end of the platform. A moment, and then a gentleman appears, leading Leigh forward, and at sight of her there is a burst of hearty welcome. She is looking superbly handsome, being dressed with exquisite taste and care in a dress of tawny silk, with dashes of vivid crimson here and there; and even Effie is compelled to admire her brilliant rival, who, bowing slightly, advances to the front.

Effie strikes a few chords, and then the room is flooded with the melody of Leigh's rich voice,—

"Could ye come back to me, Douglas, Douglas,

In the old likeness that I knew?

I would be so loving and tender, Douglas,

Douglas, Douglas, tender and true."

She is a consummate actress, and throws a world of yearning pain and regret into her tones. Is not Justin present, and she seeks to please him? Although he does not know it she is furtively watching him, marking the effect her voice and expression have upon him.

"Never a scornful word should pain you,  
I'd smile as sweet as the angels do;  
Smile as your smile on me alone ever,  
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true."

In her dark eyes is a new light, on her face a softer look, than Justin has ever before seen there.

"I was not half worthy of you, Douglas,  
Not half worthy the like of you;  
Now all men besides are to me like shadows,  
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true."

Oh, to bring back the days that are not;  
Mine eyes were blinded, your words were few.  
Do you know the truth now up in Heaven,  
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true."

It seems to Justin that there are tears in her voice as she goes on after an almost imperceptible pause.

"Stretch out your arms to me, Douglas, Douglas,  
Drop forgiveness from Heaven like dew,  
As I lay my head on your dear heart,  
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true."

Then follows a perfect fury of applause, and Justin sees the colour leave Leigh's perfect face, and marvels at her seeming emotion, forgetting that excitement alone can produce sudden pallor. The girl bows, a smile of triumph on her lips, and would retire, but the audience loudly reiterate "encore" until she is compelled to give one. She chooses a song in every way the opposite of "Tender and True"—a saucy Irish ballad, "Thady O'Flinn"—and even her most unwilling admirers are compelled to admit her talents are versatile, she gives them so perfect a rendering of words and air. Easily and naturally she passes from scolding to contempt of her rival, and from contempt to coquettish praise of the numerous suitors for her own hand, ending in a burst of still more coquettish admissions that she was only "teasing," and an entreaty that Thady will not vex her by again flirting with "ugly Norah Grady."

Then Leigh retires, crowned with laurels; and a glee follows.

It is not until the interval that Justin can join her, and she is then talking gaily with Conway and some others.

"I must congratulate you on your success," he says, heartily. "It was unprecedented!"

"I am proud to have gained your approval," is the answer—softly spoken, with no apparent coquetry.

"I fear I shall not have even a small share of attention when our duet comes on. You will monopolise all."

"You are flattering—an unusual thing in you!"

"Believe me, I am speaking sober truth!"

Then, as Conway addresses her, she bends her head graciously, answering kindly; and Justin feels an unwarrantable desire to thrust the little man aside.

It is a shame she should marry him, he thinks; and wonders at her new-born gentleness towards her luckless suitor.

Can she be learning to love him? Better if it is so. Yet he is annoyed at the idea of such a thing.

Later on he stands beside her, taking his part in the "Bridal duet," and thinking there is a strange earnestness in her voice as she responds, feeling a new pleasure in listening to, and looking on her.

He has never cared for the opinions of others so little—never been so indifferent to applause—as he is to-night.

He is glad to quit the platform, and to find himself in the cool room adjoining it.

"You see," Leigh laughs, "you were not overlooked, despite your fear."

"I am content to be nothing so long as you receive your proper meed of praise."

Covertly she laughs, but she remarks, demurely,—

"You have become a model courtier, Justin!"

Her words recalled him to his senses. He has been on the verge of madness, and he shivers away from the abyss, remarking, coldly,—

"Shall we join the others?"

"Oh, yes. I should like it!"

He laughs afterwards at his momentary folly.

"For a few seconds I thought I loved her—animal magnetism probably. Yet I flattered myself—I was a self-contained fellow. How she would laugh if she knew my insanity!" And, after a pause, he adds, "It might be as well to see less of her. Wiser heads than mine have been turned by women less handsome than she!"

So he holds aloof and is restless, not knowing why; but Leigh says, to her heart, "The heaven is working," and is glad. Oh, foolish Leigh!

But as days pass by, and he does not come, her spirits fail, and those around her suffer somewhat from her frequent fits of irritability. Has she deceived herself into the belief that his heart was awakening to the touch of love? After all, does he despise her and read her plots against his peace? If it should be so!

In a sudden paroxysm of shame she hides her burning face, and calls herself many hard names.

In the midst of her passion Justin is announced, and she is summoned to meet him. With all her coquetry aroused, her fears allayed, she hastens down, careless that her eyes yet show signs of tears—they had been angry ones, but how is Justin to know this? So when she enters, her beauty dimmed and softened by recent weeping, a great pity stirs the young man's heart, and, holding her fingers in an unnecessary long and close clasp, he questions,—

"Something has gone wrong?"

"Everything is wrong," she answers, quickly, with a burst of real feeling. "I think nothing will be well with me again!"

She has thrown herself into an easy chair, and he, standing over her, lays his hands upon her shoulders with a sympathetic touch.

Conway would scarcely care to see them at this identical moment. Her eyes, full of passionate pain, are lifted to Justin's face, bent nearly to her level.

He does not speak, but his fitful breath feels hot upon her cheek, and she sees the great chest heave with suppressed emotion.



Suddenly a fearful revulsion seizes her, her brain grows giddy—she realizes, with quick anguish, they had best part; and, starting up, cries, fiercely,—

"For Heaven's sake, go! I cannot bear your presence!"

He falls away from her, pale as she, but she does not look at him; she only stretches out her hands as though to force him away; and as he goes mutters to her sick heart,—

"Oh, Heaven! what a blind fool I have been!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BALL.

VERY angrily Leigh takes herself to task for her folly. Often she laughs at her love, strives to believe it does not, nor ever did exist; but, despite all her anger and scorn, the truth forces itself unpleasantly before her.

Justin's voice she listens for all through the day; on February day; Justin's face she most longs to see; and when he does not come she blames herself that she bade him go, and finds no room in her heart for rejoicing that she has made him always and for ever her "liege man."

It is almost beyond comprehension that she should love him. He has never flattered her, but rather the reverse; he has sometimes been cold and generally indifferent, and yet she loves him. In kindling the grand passion in him she has awakened her own heart, and the knowledge is very bitter to her. Each day she loathes more terribly her contract with Conway; the fetters she has riveted upon herself are cruel in their pressure; and looking round her she sees no way of escape—no faintest suggestion of a happier time to come.

It is with unfeigned joy that she, one bleak morning, finds herself face to face with Justin upon a lonely road. But she gives no sign of her joy; coldly and courteously she gives him her hand.

"You are almost a stranger," with a chilly smile; "why have you kept from us so long?"

He is tempted to tell her all—all his mad love and longing, his feverish desire to be ever near her, but he is usually self-controlled, and now he merely says he has been busy, and not very well. The latter part of his statement she can well believe, for his face is haggard, showing signs of inward conflict. He turns and walks by her.

"I am going away shortly, Leigh," he says, abruptly.

"Going away!" she echoes, drearily.

"Yes, I have already exceeded the time I allowed myself for rest. If I stayed here much longer I should rust."

"And yet you seemed to find life very endurable a short time since."

"That was because I was in a dream, from which I have been rudely awakened."

"When shall you go?"

The restraint she places upon herself renders her voice hard.

"In the course of ten days. You see I have developed into a man of the world, and my only reason for staying so long is that I have promised to be present at Mrs. Verrinder's ball."

Her dark face flushes angrily.

"The remainder of Barworth should feel flattered!"

"Oh! you are 'too cute,' as the Yankees say. I did not mean to imply that all Barworth fades into nothingness beside Mrs. Verrinder."

"Pray don't trouble to explain."

"Are you vexed, Leigh?" his voice taking a tenderer tone.

"I! oh, no! why should I be?"

"Because you might infer from my speech and conduct I had forgotten our friendship."

"I am not so unjust!" turning towards him.

"And yet I have given you very apparent cause for injustice. How is it you don't resent my extremely variable moods?"

"Because I am," then a long pause, after which, "your friend!"

He places an awful restraint upon himself, at times refrains from the barest courtesies, until she sometimes thinks he cannot love her. He remembers she is to marry his rival, and endeavours to act honourably towards Conway and himself.

One day Francis ventures to plead that Leigh will appoint their wedding-day.

"When shall it be?" he asks.

And she answers flippantly,—

"I don't care! When you please."

"I should prefer April."

"The first, I suppose; All Fool's Day, you know, Fanny. It will be most appropriate."

"I sometimes think we shall never be man and wife, Leigh, and yet you have promised—you won't break your word?"

"I can't; and none but yourself would wish to marry me. I wish we could go to a quiet little place and get the ceremony over without any fuss. I hate weddings."

Francis says timidly, "All the Conways have been married at Barworth," and then pauses.

"And you don't wish to depart from the regular course? As you please. After all? it matters little where we are married—we shall be miserable anyhow."

So he makes his preparations, and Mrs. Banks urges upon her daughter the necessity of choosing the wedding garments, but Leigh answers savagely, "Get what you like; I really have no choice—and for Heaven's sake don't plague me."

"Really Leigh, you are most absurd and unnatural."

"Did you come to preach, mother?"—turning fiercely upon her, and the faded beauty answers querulously, "I never preach; you inherit all your father's ill-temper, and none of my amiability." The girl laughs, her mother's stupid conceit amuses her. It would be a very tame world if all were amiable; and being alone once more, cried out madly, striking her hands together, "I shall go mad—oh Justin! Justin!"

So her coming marriage is announced, and folks congratulate her even whilst they pity Conway; and, in very truth, there is not much prospect of happiness for him! Leigh almost loathes him in these days, treats him always either with indifference or scorn, and yet the poor little fellow clings on to her, hoping that eventually she will love him, praying always, "Oh turn her heart to me!"

Towards the end of February the whole county is to be gathered at Mrs. Verrinder's ball, and Leigh occupies herself wholly in choosing and superintending the making of her dress—for Justin Roby will be there, and her one aim is to please him. Contrary to his usual custom, Justin arrives early at Mrs. Verrinder's, and starts eagerly, as one after another fair girl enters. It seems to him they are all dressed very nearly alike, the majority wearing pale pinks and blues, cream or white, varied occasionally by horrible red. He is getting utterly weary of watching, waiting and quizzing, and is seriously meditating escape, when Mrs. Banks appears, dressed in a juvenile fashion, and smiling coquettishly. Justin looks eagerly above and beyond her, and his vigil is rewarded by sight of Leigh.

Supremely indifferent to admiration or condemnation she moves forward, the handsomest woman there, and her wonderful beauty is heightened by her dress, which is a complete contrast to any other present. It is composed of some soft, gauzy black material, with deep orange draperies, and in her hair she wears golden crocuses, whilst her ornaments are very few and unique.

Justin has resolved to avoid her to-night, to worship her at a distance, to be very cold and constrained if they stand face to face—all very wise and good, if only he remembers. He stands aside whilst others dance, watching the magnificent supple form moving rapidly to and fro; he marks the flush on her face, the

wonderful softness in her eyes, and his good resolves begin to melt away.

Why should he not be happy for one night—why should not *they*? For surely she loves him, else why that sudden cry, "For Heaven's sake, go?" Had she not feared her own heart, and known the strength of his love? So he yields to the overwhelming passion possessing him, and walks boldly to her side. She is looking weary, although she is talking rapidly to Conway, and her marvellous face brightens at Justin's approach.

"So you are come at last!"

He bows.

"I thought I had offended you, and you intended punishing me by holding aloof."

"You seem to have a very poor opinion of my amiability. Have I always shown myself such a monster to you?"

"You must speak louder, the music deafens me," with a horrible dread that he will grow "sentimental" before Conway.

He divines her motive, and says, frigidly,—

"Is your programme quite full?"

"I don't know. You were so long coming, I did not think it advisable to save you any dance. I hate sitting out"—but she hands him the little scented tablet. She is disengaged for a gallop and a waltz.

"May I have the waltz?"

"If you wish; but I thought you disliked waltzing?"

"I generally dislike dancing in any form. To-night is an exception. I am affected with periodical insanity," scribbling his initials, and giving the programme to her once more.

"Our waltz is not until after supper, I see, and I believe I have three partners to amuse, or mutilate by my awkwardness, before that much to-be-desired time, so for the present adieu!"

The next moment Leigh is claimed by a youth for the mazurka, and Justin moves away to seek his partner.

To him the time passes slowly enough, and it seems he will never rejoin Leigh.

With fearful intensity he craves to be with her alone, but for a few minutes, made long by a life-time of passion being crowded into them, a world of wild regrets and unfortunate longings. To hold that dear form to himself once were worth dying for; and oh! to kiss her lips and know they passionately responded to his caress.

He looked like one walking in a dream, his face pale, and his eyes wide open; yet seeing nothing around, save an occasional glimpse of her dress, or her face as it flashed by him, full of life and exultant pride.

At last he finds himself beside her.

"It is my turn now, Leigh!" he says, and his voice refuses to be completely controlled.

"You have been so besieged by admirers all this evening that a poor wretch like me has had no chance."

"You were late in seeking one, and according to a motto song,—

"You should never let your chances,  
Like sunbeams, pass you by."

His arm is around her, and they are already whirling round the room to the intoxicating strains of "Sweethearts;" and the girl for awhile forgets all but this man, throws everything to the wind, even as he does.

The music heats into their brains, and wakes a passionate echo in their hearts; all the colour leaves her perfect face, and with eyes half closed, sick with emotion, she speeds on. Dowagers and elderly girls are scandalized at the sight.

"Leigh Banks ought to be ashamed of herself, and they had thought better things of Roby," then turn to look at them, at his fierce face and wild eyes, and at the utter abandonment to present joy her whole appearance indicates, and even as curious eyes follow them, Justin pants, "Shall we stop?"

"No, no! go on—oh! Justin."

"What?" he questions, hoarsely; but she makes no reply, and he goes on: "This is our last good time. To-morrow I leave home,

and when I return again you will be Mrs. Conway."

Brought to herself suddenly, she cries, sharply,—

"Stop! Why did you say that? I don't care to dance longer."

"Come on to the balcony; do me this one little kindness."

"As you will," and together they pass out.

The quiet of the night, and the cold, serene sky act as a sedative on Leigh's much excited nerves; but Justin is beyond all discretion, and the girl knows her moment of bitter, sweet triumph is nigh, and works to further its consummation. The young man stands by her, and lifting her eyes, she sees his full of love striving vainly with honour.

"Last night," he says, "I determined not to come here."

"Why?" leaning a little towards him, her cheeks flushed, her eyes glowing.

"Because I knew you would be here."

"And you so hated me you would fain avoid me?" letting her eyelashes droop. "You are very cruel."

Her voice falls mournfully at the close of her speech, and Justin says quickly,—

"Hate you! You know I don't, and as for cruelty, Leigh, that is all inflicted on myself."

"I don't understand," still with downcast eyes. "You are an enigma to me."

"As I am, to myself—and others," then, as she half-turns towards the ball-room, he lays his hand upon her arm.

"Don't go," he entreats, "at least, not yet—this is my last good time with you."

Despite herself, she trembles as she yields, and, leaning on the balcony, dare not look at him for a few brief moments.

He draws nearer.

"Whatever comes, I shall have the memory of to-night's happiness to console me."

"Are you happy?"

"Not what some would call happy, but more so than I can hope to be again."

So close is he that he feels her breath warm upon his face, and when her eyes meet his he thinks he reads in them the reflection of his own love.

"Leigh, did it ever strike you that I could love like other men?—forego everything for my love?"

"Never—until lately," and her heart beats tumultuously, whilst conscience begins to reprove.

"I have been a consummate ass—if I had not been so convinced of my infallibility in that respect I should not be here to-night. First I would not come because I should see you—then, again, I would come because I should see you. Surely you must understand now! It is hard to tell, because once I set myself up as your mentor, nay, your judge. You are distinctly not the woman I should have chosen to love—but against my will I love you."

She feels a moment's mad mingling of joy and anguish, then suddenly she turns upon him, speaking low and rapidly,—

"You have forgotten what is due to Mr. Conway—what respect you owe me as his future wife. Are you dead to honour?"

Justin shrinks back from her, his haggard face showing very ghastly in the bright moonlight. He would speak, but she interrupts him.

"I had a supreme belief in you—esteemed you as a man above his fellows. I am sorely disappointed."

"Stay, Leigh!" he cries, quickly, "few women would be thus angry at a confession like mine. I ask for nothing, look for nothing, and, without hurting Conway, you might give me a kindly word. You would not compromise yourself even if you wished me well," a half-sneer about his lips. Then falling again into the lover's mood, "And, although you are to be Conway's wife, I think it best for both that I should go away, for, upon my soul, Leigh, I believe you love me."

At this she laughs, and a flash of triumph passes across her handsome face.

"Love you! and for why? What reason have you ever given me to love you?"

"None, I confess freely," he answers, almost humbly; "but love is of the heart, and has nothing to do with reason. I beg your forgiveness of my error—it was a natural one."

"Why so?" her face marked with anger.

"Because you treated me with marked deference, looked and spoke as though you were glad to meet me—with me you were shy; a new thing in you."

"Do you love me very greatly?" she questions, softly.

"More than life or honour!" he answers, miserably.

"I am glad!" all the softness going from face and voice. "You despised and avoided me, called me hard names, saw no good in me, made no allowance for my wretched training, were harsh and intolerant; and I vowed to punish you for your arrogance, if it were possible,"—how quickly she is speaking, with his eyes upon hers she is half-afraid—"I vowed to myself you should love me (he starts), and to you I was deferential, gentle, a new creature. I begged your advice—your friendship—and you fell so easily into my snare there was very little fun in the venture; but you are punished—and—and I am satisfied!"

If the young man's face was pale before it is ashen now, and she shivers a little from him.

"As you say, I fell an easy prey, but still I am bound to compliment you on the masterly execution of your plans." His lips twitch curiously, but he is very calm; Leigh wishes he would flash into passionate words, they would be easier to bear. "You will forgive me that I cannot take you back to the room. Good-night!"

A few moments after, his dark figure is crossing the lawn hurriedly; and Leigh, stretching out her hands wildly, moans to him to return, crying, passionately, she loves him, and had not meant those foolish, cruel words. But he does not heed or hear; he hurries through the lovely, serene night, with down-bent head and passion-torn heart.

What a fool he has been to succumb to the wiles of a siren!

Well, he brought all this pain and shame upon himself, and he will bear it as becomes a man. He must do penance for his folly, for surely it was folly to pin his faith to a known coquette. Yet, what a coquette!

How few would have boldly confessed, as she had confessed, her misdoing—and there had been no shame, or shadow of shame, in her bearing.

"Is she quite heartless?" he questions. And then he remembers her look as she once begged him, "for Heaven's sake to go away!" and refuses to believe she does not love him. Then reason whispers, "It was all a part of the play," and he grows furious with her.

"At least," he thinks, "I believed her above hypocrisy. She said she determined to punish me for my arrogance—this is the reward I receive for endeavouring to perfect her character. Well, I suppose I deserve it all—but that is poor consolation."

Long after Justin has gone, Conway finds Leigh leaning over the balcony, with white face and heavy eyes, and, in answer to his question, "Where is Roby?" she says, miserably, "He went away awhile ago."

"Did you send him away?" he ventures to ask.

"Yes."

"Will you tell me why?"

"No. Fanny, I should like to go home, but I am afraid my going would excite curiosity."

"It certainly would."

"Then I'll stay," and, looking very white and miserable, she returns to the ball-room with Conway.

## CHAPTER IV.

### LOVE VERSUS MONEY.

EARLY in the morning Justin leaves home not without first being cross-examined by his father and Effie as to his sudden and unceremonious departure from Mrs. Verrinder's. Effie is especially curious, but Justin parries all their questions skillfully, and flatters himself that his ordeal is over. Still his sister is not satisfied; she had seen his white-passioned-marked face as he whirled round the room with Leigh, had noticed their long absence, and Leigh's return with Conway, not Justin; had seen the girl's miserable face, and woman's instinct told her there had been a scene of more than ordinary interest acted between them. Is it possible Justin had fallen a victim to the girl's charms, he, the cool, sarcastic man of the world? To Effie it seems unlikely, and yet it is the only reason she can find for his strange conduct of the previous night. So when she kisses him, and says good-bye, she adds, imprudently: "Had Leigh anything to do with last night's peculiar conduct?"

His face darkens. "Do you suppose my actions are governed by a woman? I thought you knew me well enough to read my conduct aright; you are perfectly aware I am not a society man, consequently am out of any element at a ball, so I usually beat an early retreat."

"Don't be angry, dear; if I was mistaken I am glad. I should be sorry indeed if you did that coquette."

You are no exception to the general run of women, Effie; you cannot speak well of one of your own sex," and he strides savagely away, leaving Effie more than confirmed in her former belief.

It is very late indeed when Leigh appears in the breakfast-room, and Cyril Banks has already gone out with his dogs, so the girl finds only her mother there. She looks up as Leigh seats herself listlessly at the table.

"Tired?"

"Awfully, mother."

"Yet you did not appear to dance so much as usual."

"I had a violent headache."

"After Mr. Roby left?" questions Mrs. Banks, significantly.

"What do you mean?" the girl retorts fiercely.

"I wish you would not yield to such unladylike displays of temper," says the other, querulously; "and in future I should advise you to be more circumspect in your conduct."

With forced calmness Leigh says, "Explain yourself, mother."

"I was compelled to hear many unpleasant remarks last night concerning your flirtation with Justin Roby. I must confess I never saw you so incoherent—so careless of public opinion. That odious Mrs. Westrop said she should not be surprised if Mr. Roby, and not Francis, would call me mother eventually."

The girl breaks into a hard laugh. "And you were afraid for me? You forget that my training has been such as to make me scoff at love unaccompanied by wealth; you know how I crave for the flesh-pots of Egypt. You forget, too, the preparations for my marriage are too far advanced for me to draw back, even supposing I wished it."

Looking a little reassured, Mrs. Banks asks, "But was there nothing between you and young Roby?"

"No; but last night we quarrelled violently about a trifling matter, and I said such words that it is extremely improbable he will forget them or forgive me. Now you know all, and I beg you will plague me with no more questions."

And Conway coming in, the conversation takes another turn.

All day long Leigh refuses to go out, half-hoping Justin has not gone, that he will yet come to her, and wonders what he will say, and how she shall reply; and when at last the shutters are closed and the night wears on,



she is forced to believe him gone, and grows heartick and angry with herself for her folly.

Poor Leigh! Very bitterly does she regret her misdoing; very dearly is she paying for it; and it stings her pride to remember his words, "You are not the woman I should have chosen against my will I love you." She herself had wooed him and confessed this to him. "He can but despise me," she thinks in her deep abasement, "and I love him."

Then she contrasts him with Francis, and the comparison is not favourable to the latter. He appears more stupid—more nervous in his bearing—than before; more inconsequent.

Her father galls her fearfully; and the day is not far distant when they are to be rivaled for a lifetime. She is not a weeping woman, so she does not indulge in the feminine luxury of tears; her pain and shame find vent only in frequent fits of irritability, or bursts of uncontrolled rage.

Poor Conway does not have a very comfortable time, and the servants declare "Miss Leigh's temper is growing like her father's."

One day she goes with her lover to see the improvements he is making at the Manor for her sake, and having visited room after room she seats herself wearily on a workman's bench, and, in answer to Conway's anxious question, "Do the alterations please you?" says, ungraciously, "Yes; I have nothing to say against them."

"Nor for them?" he queries, with a nervous laugh. "Yet I have consulted your wishes throughout."

She speaks with remorse.

"You are very good, Francis, to consult my wishes and study my tastes thus, and I am sorry you should have troubled yourself so greatly—for I don't believe I shall ever come here as your wife!"

He asks quickly, with a slight change of colour,—

"Have you any fresh complaint to make of me?"

"Yes. It is that you are too good to me—an uncommon kind of complaint!" laughing in a hard way. "I believe if you ill-treated me I should like you better. When I am insolent you show no resentment; and—and, upon my word, Fanny, you remind one of a spaniel, who will lick the hand that struck him but a moment before."

"I would bear more than insolence from you," he says, with a hurt look.

"But, Fanny"—gravely—"are you in love with misery that you so persist in your desire to marry me?" Then, laughing again, "Do you so greatly wish to figure as a henpecked husband?—for you will be henpecked!"

"I only know I will marry you, if I can," he answers, almost sullenly.

She rises and says, hastily,—

"Let us go—as we shall doubtless spend years in each other's society, it would be as well to see as little of each other alone until the day comes," and she rustles down the corridor, her lover following with quick, short steps.

He assists her into her saddle, and they ride away side by side.

One workman, looking after them, says to another,—

"Ay; but, mate, she is real handsome, but as fiery as Lucifer. I pity the master!"

"I don't. He's not blind, and so can see she cares only for his money, not for him!" and they fall once more to work.

So the days and weeks wear by, and it is now the middle of March.

A great change has come upon Leigh, and folks are not slow to notice it. Her face looks worn, and every vestige of colour has gone from it; whilst her eyes are heavy, and her voice languid. She does not care to ride or walk, and when in society is quiet and distant; but to all inquiries she answers, "I am perfectly well," and sometimes adds, petulantly, "but tired of all the fuss and bother of the last six weeks."

Mrs. Banks remonstrates with, and tries to rouse her from her seeming apathy, whilst

her father alternately storms at and coaxes her. But she is indifferent alike to anger or caresses, and her parents acknowledge to themselves "they will be glad when the marriage has been consummated—that they, meanwhile, live in daily fear of a rupture."

Effie writes to Justin of the change in Leigh. "Perhaps," she says, "you will not find any interest in the news I send; but you have known Leigh Banks so long that it seems natural to write you of her. She is wonderfully altered both in face and manner, being now very pale and faded-looking, and so quiet that one forgets she is in a room with one. Some say she regrets her coming marriage, and it really appears that she does. A few pity her, and blame Mr. Banks; but for my part, I think Leigh richly deserves to be miserable, for she has often made Mr. Conway so, treating him worse than a slave, which is a poor return for his devotion."

Justin smiles cynically over some parts of Effie's letter, but over others he grows grave, whilst the conviction seizes him that it is for his sake Leigh has so changed, and a feeling of triumph fills the young man's heart.

After all he is not the only sufferer; her vengeance has recoiled upon herself; and she is reaping the bitter harvest she sowed. Then his better self returns, and a vast pity stirs him for this proud, misguided, remorseful girl.

He thinks of her wretched home-life, her mercenary training; and his face softens, a kindly light comes into the sometimes cold eyes.

"Poor girl!" he mutters, and would fain go to her, but pride and honour alike forbid such a step.

So he waits impatiently for the next news of her.

"I suppose it will be her marriage," he thinks, bitterly, "and if I had been rich I might have been the happy man."

Meantime Cyril Banks' creditors are daily growing more impatient, and the reverend gentleman looks forward eagerly to the first of April, when once more he will be free from pecuniary anxieties; free, too, to contract fresh debts, for he finds it an impossibility to live within his income.

And now it wants but a week to the eventful day, and Leigh's mental agony is almost more than she can bear. In her heart there is a wild cry for Justin, which she must suppress, and very fully she realizes what her future will be.

She sees herself growing hard, old, and unlovely, sees Conway weary of her caprices, and in the whole world there will be no one to love her.

When her beauty is gone folks will think only of her pride and passion, and those who once admired will be readiest to condemn.

"What an enviable woman I am," she thinks, bitterly, and feels nought

"But dull unresting pain  
That makes all memory sick, all striving vain."

Later in the day a small box is brought to her, and after cutting the string and removing sundry wrappers, she comes upon a handsome white fan of Indian workmanship, and the card enclosed tells her it is Justin's wedding gift.

With a cry of quick pain and passion she puts it aside, and covering her face with her hands, cries out,—

"Oh, cruel—cruel! Yet I deserve the scoff," and moans and writhes in her agony, but does not weep.

Then a thought comes to her that makes her start to her feet, with flushed cheeks and bright eyes—"Is it too late to break her word to Conway?"

Surely not; and yet, how can she bear the curious questionings, the unbounded ridicule of her set if she should do this thing? Gifts have already been showered lavishly upon her, and she has been everywhere fêted as future mistress of the Manor.

Is her pride great enough to carry her through such an ordeal? And what reason can

she give for her sudden change of purpose? What will her home-life be? She shrinks fearfully from the thought of that; and once more pale and passion-stirred sits down to think what she shall do.

She never for a moment supposes Justin will return to her; her one thought and longing is to be free, to escape the wretched life she herself had once elected to bear.

The day wears on, and evening finds her still "halking between two opinions," and full of new pity for her unfortunate suitor. Has she any right to expose him to ridicule? Yet it must fall on him as on her, and were it not better to endure transient rillery than life-long misery?

Finally, in a fit of desperation, she writes to Francis, not pausing once, lest she should waver in her purpose.

"DEAR MR. CONWAY,—  
"I scarcely know how to write you. The remembrance of your unvarying kindness makes me hesitate to give you pain; but I think, when you have reflected seriously on what I have to say, you will acknowledge I am acting for our mutual happiness. You, in common with others, have noticed the late change in me, and to you I confess my unhappy engagement is the cause of it. Will you try to forgive when I say I cannot go through with it? I feel I shall make both you and myself most miserable if I do as you wish, and it is better to speak truth now than when it is too late. I know I shall expose, not only myself, but you to ridicule. My own share I can bear, but it grieves me that you should suffer for my unworthy sake. It is idle to say forgive me, and yet I should be glad to know you cherished no anger against me. In conclusion, let me beg you not to see me, and you are at perfect liberty to make known my shameful share in this transaction. And I confess myself profoundly ashamed of my whole conduct towards you.—Yours, &c.,  
"LEIGH BANKS."

Then in great trepidation she despatches her note to Conway, who is not expected at the Rectory this evening, and having done this she feels lighter of heart than she has been for many a long day.

This evening Conway is dining alone, and, when Leigh's note is brought him he feels a little thrill of pleasure, partly because his fiancée so rarely favours him with a line. He breaks the seal carefully and slowly (it was one of Leigh's complaints that he was always careful and slow). Then catching sight of "Dear Mr. Conway," his heart fails him, and he lays down the note, pausing to gather courage to meet an evil, the nature of which he dare not even guess.

He hardly suspects the truth, scarcely believes Leigh can retract when the day fixed for her marriage, is so near; so when he resumes his reading, his astonishment is so great that his jaw drops and his eyes dilate. Poor Francis, despite his grief he looks pitifully absurd, his pale eyes blinking and suspiciously moist; his prematurely bald head shining in the gas-light, whilst with one hand he twitches an entirely imaginary moustache, and ever and anon he mutters,—

"She can't mean it!—she would not be so false!"

All night the poor little fellow ponders over her words, until the truth penetrates even his obtuse brain, and then he buries his face in his arms and cries like a little child. But when morning comes he has resolved what to do; he will not remain to add to her pain and shame—he does not think now of his own—he will go away until this affair has blown over somewhat, and when he returns he will only beg they may be friends.

"Forgive her!" he mutters, with a sort of sob. "Heaven bless her! it is all my fault. I would marry her although she always said she hated me!"

He gave orders that his portmanteau should be at once packed, and surprised the servants by speaking sharply. He said he was going away, and should take only his valet with him;

he had had time to make no arrangements concerning the house, but he would send instructions to Mrs. Johnson, the housekeeper. Then he wonders if Cyril Banks knows what Leigh has done, and reflects that he should write to him.

He is very long in penning this note although it is so short, for he does not wish to blame, or even seem to blame, Leigh; but at last it is finished, and he reads it aloud to satisfy himself that he has not reproached her.

"Dear Sir,—Miss Banks and I have agreed to consider our engagement at an end, believing it will be for our mutual happiness. I am going away for a short time, in fact, until this affair has blown over, and when I return I trust I shall be received as a friend at the Rectory.—

"Yours very sincerely,

"FRANCIS CONWAY."

Then he writes a foolish, unselfish letter to Leigh, and gives them to a servant with orders to deliver them when he is gone.

Leigh is in her room when his note is brought her, and the pitiful, simple words touch her heart—soften her so that the rare tears spring to her eyes, as with a voice broken and tender, she says,—

"Poor Francis! I have not deserved such goodness at his hands. Poor Francis!"

Then luncheon is announced, and she goes down to meet only her mother.

"Where is father?" she questions, rather nervously.

"In the library looking over accounts. Thank Heaven, our difficulties will soon end now; but I shall not breathe freely until you are married."

"Mother," says the girl, softly, "that is what I have to tell you. We must do without Mr. Conway's money. I am not going to marry him."

"What?" screams Mrs. Banks. "Are you mad, Leigh?"

"No," almost laughing; "I believe I am perfectly sane; but I know if I married Francis we should both be miserable."

"How can you be so selfish as to study nothing but your own happiness?" moans Mrs. Banks. "Have you no pity for your parents?"

"I am sorry for you, mother," the girl says, gently, "but I cannot go against the dictates of my heart; and"—her face hardening—"I am not sorry for my father. He has brought all this trouble upon himself."

"What will he say when he knows it?"

"I think he does know it. Francis has written to him. He told me that in his letter."

"Then you have spoken to Mr. Conway, and without consulting us?"

"I wrote to him last evening."

"And what does he say?"

"That all shall be as I wish."

"I should have thought he would have insisted on the marriage. Oh! what shall we do now? You have brought us all to beggary, and one day you will rue your folly. Oh, the ingratitude of children!"

"Mother," and Leigh's voice is very low with the struggle to keep down her rising passion, "reproaches are worse than useless now; and if you reflect a moment, you will see my lot will be harder than yours. You forget I shall encounter ridicule and condemnation. Will you make it harder for me to bear these things by adding your rebuke, your anger?"

"You deserve all the hard things that may be said of you!" retorts Mrs. Banks, with flashing eyes.

"I know I do," answers Leigh, humbly, "and I am heartily ashamed of my past conduct."

Without heeding her daughter's last words, Mrs. Banks continues,—

"What will your father say? I don't like his taking it so quietly. I'm sure it means no good;" and, after a little hesitation, she adds, "At all events, I will know the worst," and hastens to the library.

She listens a moment outside the door; all

is very quiet, so she turns the handle and goes in.

Sitting alone, Leigh hears a terrible shriek, and fearing she knows not what runs to her mother's assistance.

In an easy chair is Cyril Banks, Conway's letter crushed in his right hand, while his left hand and his head hang over an arm of the chair; Mrs. Banks is on her knees before him, sobbing and calling to him to speak. Leigh lifts her mother from the floor.

"Rush! mother—it is a fit."

She loosens his cravat, and rings for a servant, whom she despatches for a doctor, and, calling for water, bathes her father's face and chafes his hands.

They are icy cold, and fall helplessly from hers; with a great fear in her eyes, she lays her hand upon his heart, and feeling no stir there falls away from him, her face changed and marred by a great horror.

Her mother clings about her.

"Leigh! Leigh! what is it? Don't you fall now!"

The girl stands erect, not heeding the wailing woman. Her face is rigid and white, even to the proud lips, her eyes are full of agony and remorse.

"Is he dead?" means her mother.

"Oh, Heaven! yes," and catches her mother to her; but the latter thrusts her away.

"You killed him! you killed him!"

She hears like one in a nightmare, vainly striving to respond. She sees her mother borne out of the room, knows the doctor has entered, and still she cannot speak.

"You had better go out," says the medical man, kindly; but she shakes her head, and he proceeds to examine Cyril Banks.

Lifting his head, after a short pause, he says,—

"Heart disease, I should say. He has had a fearful shock. I am truly sorry for you, Miss Banks."

With white lips and hoarse voice she asks,—

"Must there be an—an inquest?"

"I fear so."

She turns from him. Something in her look makes him anxious for her.

"Where are you going?" he asks. "You are unfit to be alone."

"I am going to my mother—if she will have me," she answers, quietly; "and I am well—and—and calm."

Still unsatisfied, he urges that he may send his wife down to her.

She thanks him, but declines his kindly offer, saying she cannot meet a comparative stranger.

"I have much to think of—let me alone!" she pleads, and he goes from the house full of pity for the unhappy girl.

## CHAPTER V.

### SICK AND HEARTBROKEN.

THE inquest has been held, and the verdict was "heart disease," and in his darkened room lies all that remains of Cyril Banks.

Like a restless spirit Leigh wanders about the house with white, set face, and heavy eyes, and steps that flag and falter. Sometimes the silence and gloom of the house so oppress her that she could shriek with agony and fear. Many a time her hand is on the heavy curtains with an impulse to sweep them back and let in the sunshine and the cool air.

Those who see her marvel at the awful change in her, knowing that the Rector and his daughter had never professed any great affection one for the other. True, he had never been a kind parent; she can remember very few fond words of his; and he had been anxious to marry her to her richest suitor (whether she would or no) to free himself from pecuniary difficulties; yet, despite all these things, he was her father, and now that he is dead she forgets his faults and would give her life to bring him back. Give her life! Yes, even that; for what were the words her mother said in the first hour of her widowhood?

"You killed him!" Leigh shrinks and shivers, hiding her face, trying to shut out her father's image, moaning,—

"What am I? Oh! what am I?"

Surely she is a murderer! Was not the sudden knowledge of her broken engagement the shock that had been his death? With unstrung nerves, and an already diseased mind she is incapable of combating with this thought, and daily her melancholy increases, whilst she grows physically weaker and more listless.

Then Mr. Geoffrey Liancourt, a cousin of Mrs. Banks, arrives with his mother, now a very old lady, and he holds long consultations with the late Rector's solicitor. He is very kind to the widow (he had once been her lover), but he does not regard Leigh with a favourable eye; she is too like her father, his once successful rival, to whom he is certainly ardent, all the obloquy which will surround the dead man's name, might have been prevented had Leigh only possessed a little worldly wisdom. The girl sees little of her mother, who is generally closeted with old Mrs. Liancourt, and she wanders about feeling forsaken of all.

At last comes the day of the funeral, and Leigh, sitting all alone, hears the carriages go slowly down the drive, and neither cries nor moans—she is past that now. Lost in her miserable thoughts she buries her face on her arms, and does not stir or speak until a maid comes in and draws aside the curtains.

Then, starting up, she flings the window open, crying,—

"Light and air! light and air!" and, leaning out, lifts her white, wild face skyward, drinks great draughts of the fresh, morning air; then, turning to the maid, asks: "What day is it, Alice? I've lost all count of hours and days!"

"Wednesday, the first of April, miss."

Poor Leigh!

"It was to have been my wedding-day. I don't look very much like a bride!" she says, with a choking laugh that frightens Alice more than tears or sobs.

"I am afraid you are very ill, Miss Leigh," she says, gently. "Can I do anything for you?"

"No." Then lifting piteous eyes to the girl's gentle face: "You are the only who has spoken kindly to me since he died!"

"We all feel grieved for you, miss, but we dare not be so bold as to offer sympathy."

"You think I should resent it? Once I might have done—but not now."

Then once more she is alone, and she begins to wonder what people are saying of her, feels curious in a vague way to know where Conway is, and what he is doing. In her present pain even his love and sympathy would not be distasteful to her.

In the midst of these thoughts she is summoned to the library, where she finds Mr. Liancourt, her mother, the solicitor, and a few distant relatives. The lawyer places a chair for her, and she sits down, hearing but not heeding what is said until Mr. Liancourt addresses her.

"I wish you to understand that your father has left nothing behind him save debts, which his effects will not nearly cover, so that if his name is to be kept free from reproach it necessary for me to satisfy his creditors. Do you follow me?" for Leigh's eyes have wandered from him, and she scarcely seems to hear him; but she answers yes, and Mr. Liancourt goes on: "I shall do this, not for his sake, but your mother's. You will of course have to leave the Rectory, I don't know yet how soon, but your mother will make my home here. You, who are the primary cause of all this trouble, can hardly expect me to welcome you as a permanent member of the household; to use a homely saying, 'you have made your bed and you must lie on it.' Still, until you have found some ladylike occupation, I am willing to entertain you."



He pauses, but Leigh does not lift her eyes, neither moves nor speaks.

"I suppose you could fill the post of companion or governess. Your education has fitted you for either?"

"Yes."

"Then with my recommendation you may speedily obtain employment. We will speak further of this to-morrow."

"Very well—may I go now?" she asks, apathetically, and glances a moment at the cold, condemning faces before her.

"Certainly; we can dispense with you now," and he opens the door for her. She passes out feeling sick and heartbroken and alone.

She goes miserably to her room, and, seating herself before the open window, bends her burning brow upon the sill and tries to think of her future. But her head throbs and aches so badly that thought is impossible, so she gives up the struggle.

"It's no use, I cannot think. Oh! how my head aches! Not one to speak kindly to me! Oh! Heaven! How shall I bear it?"

She does not go down again this evening, and in the morning, as she does not appear at the breakfast table, Mrs. Banks sends Alice to her. The girl finds Leigh sitting erect with bright eyes and burning cheeks, laughing, talking, and gesticulating. Very much alarmed, Alice goes down again, and after seeing Leigh, Mrs. Banks sends for Dr. May.

The medical man soon appears, and when he sees Leigh looks very grave.

"She is in high fever—it is what I feared; you must get a nurse."

"Is there any danger?" questions Mrs. Banks, fearfully.

"Yes—to Miss Leigh," returns the doctor, contemptuously.

As he is going away Alice accosts him.

"Do you think, sir, I may stay with Miss Leigh until nurse comes?"

"Can you be very quiet and watchful?"

"Yes, sir, you may depend on me."

"You seem grieved for your young lady?"

"I am, sir; she was always good to me!"

Day after day passes, and still Leigh lies at death's door; the bells are muffled, and the few remaining servants move to and fro quietly, speaking in whispers. Mr. and Mrs. Liancourt have left for home, and Mrs. Banks occupies rooms in a remote part of the house. Three times a day she sends to inquire of Leigh's state, but does not venture near the sick room.

Many of the girl's old friends rally about her now, some sending gifts of grapes and flowers, others kind messages which she cannot understand. Effie Roby, who, despite her envy is good at heart, begs earnestly to be allowed to stay with her, and this being denied, to see her. And finding even this last request is refused, she listens awhile outside Leigh's door, calling on her gently. But there is no reply—only Leigh's rich voice chanting wildly,—

"I loathe the squares and streets,  
And the faces that one meets,  
Hearts with no love for me!"

And again,—

"I killed him! oh! I killed him!"

Inexpressibly saddened, Effie leaves the Rectory.

"I wish I had been kinder to her," she thinks. "I have spoken so harshly of her to others, and now perhaps I can never atone for it!"

Then they cut off all Leigh's beautiful hair, Alice standing by and crying quietly, as look after look is severed from the poor head. Still for many days the answer to all inquiries is, "No better," and people as they pass the Rectory glance askance at it lest haply the blinds shall be drawn, and the shutters closed for beautiful Leigh.

Then Francis Conway returns, having heard of her illness, and no one thinks of ridiculing him now that the girl who was to have been his bride is almost within death's grasp. He meets Effie Roby often, and makes her the

bearer of many tender messages, although she assures him Leigh would not understand, even if she were permitted to see her.

Alice tells him it is pitiful to hear the sick girl's ravings, her self-reproaches, her entreaties that Conway will forgive her; she does not add that Justin's name, coupled with endearing words, is often on her lips. Then she will chant or murmur scraps of poetry, wild or melancholy, and will cry out that she is alone in the world. "But," adds Alice, "I had rather hear her moan and cry than laugh and sing, as she sometimes does. Why only last night, sir, she sang such merry songs, and laughed so strangely, that my blood ran cold in my veins."

But at last there comes a change; the strong constitution triumphs, and Leigh is pronounced out of danger, but so fearfully weak as to require unremitting attention; and for many days she is allowed to see no friends for fear of excitement. She is too weak to talk, or wonder much about the past few weeks. She asks no questions, but lies back amongst her pillows, watching with dreamy eyes, the figures of the nurse or Alice as they move to and fro; or she will follow the flight of a lark into the blue heavens, listening in the same half-conscious way to its glad music. But as things around grow more real—as day by day she comes back to life—old thoughts and memories haunt her, and the tears fill her eyes, she being too weak to stay them.

"I wish I had died, she says to Alice, now her constant attendant." "It is so hard coming back to life again. Why should I live? What is there to make me desire life? I have no home—no friends."

"Indeed, miss, you wrong some true hearts when you say that!"

"Forgive me, Alice, I had forgotten you!"

"I am not your only friend. Why, Miss Roby comes every day, asking to see you."

"That is very kind of her—I used not to treat her well," with flushed cheeks.

"And then there is Mr. Conway!"

"Do you know where he is now, Alice?"

"Yes, miss, at home. He came as soon as he knew you were ill. He said he could not rest away."

After this Leigh is very quiet; perhaps in her heart she wishes to question Alice concerning Justin, but if so, she holds her peace. Presently her mother comes to her. The girl turns her wasted face and fine eyes pleadingly upon her, as though entreating kind words and gentle looks; the elder lady stoops and kisses her. Then Leigh draws her face down on the pillows besides her own, and Mrs. Banks feels tears upon her cheek.

"What is it, Leigh? Aren't you so well to-day?"

"Better, mother; but I feel so horribly forlorn! Did you mean what you said that dreadful day?"

"Don't speak of that day!" cries Mrs. Banks, with her handkerchief to her eyes.

"You are cruel to remind me of my loss!"

Leigh moves wearily on her pillows, but says nothing until her mother, having recovered her composure, asks,—

"And you are quite sure you feel stronger?"

"Oh, yes; I shall soon be about again now."

"You have all you wish for? Kind nurses—friends who will come to you so soon as they may."

"Yes, I have all these."

"You are sure I can be of no service to you? Because, if so, I shall be glad to get away; all this anxiety concerning you has made me positively ill, and my aunt and cousin are eager for me to go to them."

A moment's pause, and then Leigh says,—

"Go, by all means; I think it will be best."

"I knew you would agree with me, dear; and when you are able to travel you must come to me at once."

"Yes; will you ask Mr. Liancourt to find something for me to do? He promised that he would."

Until the door closes behind her mother she

is very calm, but being left alone she bursts into bitter tears, weeping,—

"Oh, mother! mother! mother! have you no love for me?"

So Mrs. Banks one morning kisses her daughter and says good-bye cheerfully, and turns her back gladly on the house of sickness, heedless of the heavy heart she leaves behind, or of the cry, "Mother! mother!" that breaks from the white and tremulous lips. So Leigh finds herself alone.

"Abandoned!" she says, bitterly.

But she is not abandoned, for on the very day that her mother leaves the Rectory Doctor May allows Effie to see her, only insisting that she will be very careful not to excite his patient; but when Effie sees the wasted face and sunken eyes of her former rival so great a pity fills her heart that she bursts into tears.

"Oh, Leigh! Leigh! what have they done to you?"

"Nursed me well and carefully," answers the sick girl, with a smile. "Why, Effie, this is not like you! And, forgive me, I did not think you cared so much for me!"

"I am not surprised at that," returns Effie, with self-reproach. "I used to be so dreadfully jealous of your beauty."

"There is no room for jealousy now; all my beauty is gone."

"But it will return with returning health; and even if you lost it for ever you would still have your eyes. Justin used to say they were the finest he had ever seen."

Over the wasted face steals a flush of pleasure; but Effie, seeing it, fears she has done wrong to speak of her brother; for her suspicions concerning his regard for Leigh have never wholly died out, so she hastens to speak of other things.

"I am afraid I am a very poor companion; but I have come to stay with you, if you will have one, until you are quite strong."

"Do you really mean you are willing to give up all your pleasures, your companions for the sake of me, who has never been a good friend to you?"

"I mean I shall be very glad to send for my boxes, if you will let me."

"I cannot thank you as I ought," brokenly.

"Yes, stay with me, Effie, and teach me to be more like you."

"Oh, I am naturally envious, and sometimes papa calls me priggish, so I should advise you not to take me for a model! Now, shall I read to you?"

"I should like it."

"I have here a poem by Swinburne; Justin sent it me yesterday, and I thought you would like to hear it. It is called 'Dreamland,' and is very short;—and in low, not unmusical, tones Effie reads,—

"I hid my heart in a nest of roses,  
Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;  
In a softer bed than the soft, white snow's is,  
Under the roses I hid my heart.  
Why should it sleep not? Why should it start?  
When never a leaf of the rose tree stirred?  
What made sleep flatter his wings and part?  
Only the song of a secret bird.

"Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,  
And wild leaves muffle the sun's keen dart;  
Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea does,  
And the wind is unquieter far than thou art.  
Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?  
Does the pang still fret thee of hope deferred?  
What bids the lids of thy sleep depart?  
Only the song of a secret bird.

"The green land's name that a charm encloses,  
It never was writ in the traveller's chart;  
And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is;  
It never was sold in the merchant's mart.  
The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,  
And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard;  
No hound's note wakens the wild-wood hart.  
Only the song of a secret bird.

Envoy.

"In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,  
To sleep for a season and hear no word  
Of true love's truth, or of light love's art.  
Only the song of a secret bird."

And when this is ended she produces a Tennyson, and reads until Leigh falls asleep. So day after day she tends her sick friend, with patience and love born out of pity, and all that is good in Leigh works on her smaller

nature, developing the noble and crushing the mean traits of her character, whilst her gentleness recommends itself to Leigh, so that each girl derives much good from the other.

At last Leigh is able to sit up, and Effie comes to her with pretty, flushed face and timid manner. Mr. Conway is in the library, and begs that he may see his whilom fiancée. Trembling a little the girl consents, and Francis is soon ushered into her presence. He cannot help showing how shocked he is at the change in her, and striving to hide this he stammers, and is confused. She relieves him instantly.

"You did not expect to see me so changed? Thanks to Alice and Effie, I am now rapidly regaining my strength. Effie says the looks will follow." Then, with flushed cheeks, "I am glad you have come; I wished very greatly to see you."

"I came long since, but was refused admittance."

"Effie has told me of your goodness. How can you so quickly forgive me?"

"Because I, too, need forgiveness. My conduct was quite the reverse of manly."

She looks at him surprisedly, and he seeing this, adds, quickly,—

"I forced myself upon you, knowing well you despised me. I was fool enough to think one day you would love me."

"Your forbearance should have taught me love. I did try to do my duty towards you, but as you know too well, I failed miserably. The only good thing I ever did for you was to give you your freedom. You will thank me one day for what now seems hard."

"It is hard just now," he says, ruefully; "but I begin to see you were right. I could never have made you happy."

"If you have realized that you will soon forget your pain and mortification, I am glad. I wanted to see you before I leave home for ever. I am going away from you all. I don't yet know when or where, but Mr. Liancourt has promised to find me employment."

"Poor Leigh! how hard life has grown for you."

She bravely chokes down a sob.

"I shall often think of you, of your patience and goodness to one who has deserved neither. All will be very strange to me at first, but I shall soon become reconciled to my altered position; at all events, a flash of pride lighting her eyes, "I will never eat the bread of charity."

Here Effie enters.

"I am afraid, Mr. Conway, you are exciting my patient," she says, with a smile, "and that is a thing to be avoided. Will you forgive me if I send you away?"

Conway answers, confusedly,—

"Certainly, oh, yes, certainly, Miss Roby," and then to Leigh, "May I come again?"

"I shall like to see you if you care to come. Good-bye, Francis. We are to be friends?"

"With all my heart. Good-bye!"

As the door closes upon him, Leigh says,—

"I wish he would marry you, Effie; I think you would be a tolerably happy couple."

Effie blushes, but says nothing.

((To be concluded in our next.))

## FACETIÆ.

The wretch has been arrested who at a social party said that a young lady playing the pianoforte was like an ape because her fingers were "mong keys."

A SMART man explained to his little daughter that the days in summer were longer than in winter because heat made everything expand. But he could not, on the same principle, explain the length of the nights in winter.

"WHAT is the chief use of bread?" asked an examiner at a recent school exhibition. "The chief use of bread," answered the urchin, apparently astonished at the simplicity of the inquiry, "is to spread butter and marmalade on it."

A SUBSCRIPTION paper was lately circulated, with the following object in view: "We subscribe and pay the amount opposite our names for the purpose of paying the organist and a boy to blow the same."

SOME one asked Sir Walter Raleigh, of whom it was said he "could toil terribly," "How do you accomplish so much, and in so short a time?" "When I have anything to do," he replied, "I go and do it."

COMPLIMENTARY — VERY,—"What a good thing it would be if men were angels," said one young lady to another. "Well, my dear, all those who made love to me were," "How so?" eagerly asked the former. "Why, because they have flown!"

"THAT is a fine dog you have, my friend," said a charitable person who had just dropped a coin into the hat of a poor blind man. "It is, indeed, sir." "What will you take for him—I should like to buy him?" "Sell my dog!" exclaimed the blind man; "never, sir, never! Why, sir, I prize that dog as I do the apple of my eye."

AN IRISH lawyer having addressed the court as "gentlemen" instead of "your honours," after he had concluded a brother of the bar reminded him of his error. He immediately arose and apologized thus: "May it please the court, in the heat of debate I called your honours gentlemen. I made a mistake, your honours." The speaker then sat down.

HOTEL CLERK: "There is a newspaper-man who has been stopping with us during the week, and he has just called for his bill. If we are liberal with him, perhaps he will give us a good notice." LANDLORD: "A capital idea! Tell him there will be no charge." CLERK: "Yes, sir." LANDLORD (calling clerk back): "Anybody with him?" CLERK: "Yes, sir, his wife." LANDLORD: "All right; charge her double rates."

HIS OWN WAY.—So you are going to marry that small, wheezy, consumptive-looking specimen of a man, are you?" said one girl to another. "I really don't see what you can see in him to love." "Mary," said her friend, "Mary, your father is a small man, isn't he?" "Yes," was the reply; "but what of that?" "Nothing, except that if he wasn't small it would be doubtful if your mother would be the master. I'm going to marry that small man because I'm fond of having my own way, and won't accept any risks."

THERE is a comical story of two M.P.'s en route for Switzerland recently, who dined well rather than wisely at the Lyons buffet before taking possession of the coupe in which they were to travel to Geneva. One of them had not got far on his journey before he felt the effect of the melon he had for dessert. His companion doled him with carbonate of soda from his dressing-bag with the happiest result, and, after a good night's rest, the pair awoke at Geneva. Of course they proceeded to make their toilet, when the "doctor" discovered that all his tooth-powder was gone, though his carbonate of soda remained untouched. The question is, what was the tooth-powder which proved so valuable a corrective to a disordered stomach?

TAKING LEARNING.—A superintendent of public instruction passed a garden where a negro and his three sons were at work. "Hello, 'old man, why don't you send your sons to school?" "All de 'vailable timber, sah, is dun gone to school." "These boys should attend school; why don't you send them?" "Case my son Dan is takin' all deedication for de family. I 'lected him 'case I thought he could take larnin' better than the rest ob de boys, an' 'case he ain't no 'count at home." "You say he takes learning well?" "I reckon he does. Dat chile ain't been dar but a week, an' he's fetch home about fifty books. Oh, yes, sah; he takes lurnin' mighty well! Takes all he kin get his han's on."

WHEN is it particularly unlucky to have thirteen at table?—When you have made preparations for only twelve.

A MORNING paper recently had a personal addressed to an absconding cashier, which wound up with: "Don't ever return, and all shall be forgiven."

A CORRESPONDENT asked if the brow of a hill ever became wrinkled. The editor replied: "The only information we can give on that point is that we have often seen it furrowed."

CHARLEY went to see the apple of his eye the other evening, and, after a proper amount of affectionate conversation, said:—"I'll give you a pair of earrings, dear, if you'll earn them by letting me bore your ears." "Haven't I earned them already?" queried the fair object of his affection.

A PRETENTIOUS sharper, calling at the house of an acquaintance, seeking to ingratiate himself by paying court to the little boy of the family, said to him: "Come here, my little man. When you've grown up what are you going to do?" "I shan't do what pa says you do, I guess." "What's that, my little man?" "He says you do your creditors, and I shan't do my creditors!"

PORTULAC JONES says: "The profusion and colour of her hair would lead one to look upon it as though it was spun by the nimble fingers of the easy hours as they glided through bright June days, whose sunny rays of light had been caught in the meshes and were content to go no further." Smith expresses the same thing by saying: "Her hair was awfully red."

"Doctor, you have pulled out all the good teeth and left the bad ones." "That's so, but I have a reason for it. There is always time to take out the bad ones. As for the others, they would have finished by becoming bad and would have given you trouble. A false set will never bother you—and besides, it's fashionable to have them; they don't wear anything else now-a-days!"

FIDDLE urchin:—"I say, ma, my head aches, I'm going to stay home from school this afternoon." Solicitous maternal ancestor:—"Well, my dear, I'm sorry. Stay at home and rest; it may do you good." Three hours later feeble urchin rushes into the house with cheeks aglow:—"I tell you we had a ruffy game; eighteen to fifteen; I played short. Gimme suthin' t'eat."

At a school examination a clergyman was decanting on the necessity of children growing up loyal and useful citizens. In order to give emphasis to his remarks he pointed to a large flag hanging on one side of the school-room, and said: "Boys, what is that flag for?" An urchin who understood the condition of the room better than he comprehended the speaker's rhetoric exclaimed: "To hide the dirt, sir!"

"Do you fear lightning, Miss Fitzjoy?" inquired De Mauries, tenderly, as he saw the gathering storm in the west. "Y-e-s, I am somewhat frightened. But the lightning never seems to strike me, although most of the girls of my very set are engaged." With a hint like that, what could De Mauries do but turn on the electric current of a proposal? The wedding thunder is being rehearsed by the Bavarian Band.

THERE is a restaurant to which French people are in the habit of going. The proprietor—a good-natured German—has a sign over the door which reads, "French Spoken Here." A customer accosted him in French the other day, when he exclaimed: "Vot is dem vords you is shpeaking? Vy don't you sometimes shpeak English?" "But I thought you spoke French!" said the customer. "Your sign says, 'French Spoken Here.'" "Yas, dat is all right. Der Frenchmans vot come here, dey shpeak French shust like so many hens."



## SOCIETY.

In consequence of the very depressed condition of the Irish poplin trade, representations have been made to Her Majesty with the result that the Queen has ordered some beautiful patterns in coloured and black poplin to be forwarded to Windsor from a firm in Dublin, so that we may expect to find this native manufacture much patronised during the winter and early spring.

ABSURD as it may appear, it is no use disguising the fact that the mystery observed in regard to the Queen's journey from Balmoral to Windsor was unquestionably induced by a nervous anxiety on the part of the officials with whom rests the responsibility of Her Majesty's safety *en route*. The Queen herself has not been altogether free from qualms, but the loyal fear manifested by those about her has been really grave. Hence the secrecy which kept even the railway officials in utter ignorance of Her Majesty's plans until literally the eleventh hour.

THE arrival of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall at Bombay was the signal of great enthusiasm. Their Royal Highnesses landed at the dockyard steps, where they were received by the Governor, the Commander-in-Chief, the Admiral, the chief officials, and leading citizens to the number of 2,000. A choir of 150 Parsee children sang the National Anthem in the Gujarati version to the British air. Retgnath Khote, the Hindu chairman of the Corporation, read the municipal address of welcome, expressing satisfaction that the Duke had come to find here for a considerable period his home, and a sphere of public usefulness, and the hope that the native princes would take to heart the Duke's example of devotion to duty. The address concluded with a graceful allusion to the Duchess.

In reply, the Duke, after expressing his thanks, said he looked forward with great satisfaction to a lengthened stay in India, and was sure the experience he should gain would be of much use to him. It would afford the greatest gratification to Her Majesty to know how genuine had been the reception given to him. The Duke and Duchess then drove to Government House, the streets being crowded with people, who cheered vociferously. A Parsee lady, Mrs. Readymoney, decorated the Duke with a necklace of flowers before he entered his carriage. The streets along the route to Government House were crowded with people, and presented a picturesque and brilliant scene. The Duke met with the heartiest greeting throughout the line of route, the people cheering vociferously as long as the carriage was in sight. Both the Duke and Duchess looked remarkably well.

THE marriage of Mr. Walter Hollins, son of Lieutenant-Colonel Hollins, of Whitmore Hall, Staffordshire, with Miss Isabel Emily Florence Askew, second daughter of the late Rev. John Askew, rector of Ashchurch, Gloucestershire, took place at Christ Church, Lancaster-gate, on the 15th ult. The bride, attended by her eight bridesmaids, arrived at the church, accompanied by her brother, Mr. Hugh Askew, who afterwards gave her away, at eleven o'clock A.M., where the bridegroom and his best man, Mr. Kirk, were waiting. The service, which was choral, was performed by the Rev. Sterling Voules, vicar of Ashley, Shropshire, assisted by the Rev. R. Alfred Corbett, chaplain of Her Majesty's forces.

The dress worn by the bride was particularly noticeable from the fact of its being an evident attempt to again introduce the full-round skirts. The petticoat was made of a very handsomely-embroidered tulle Anglaise, gathered in full folds into the waist. A separate train of rich ivory duchesse satin, draped well from the front, and falling in continuous graceful folds, and fastened to the petticoat with bouquets of orange-blossoms. The bridal ornaments were a diamond necklace and earrings.

## STATISTICS.

CANADIAN LUMBER.—About 100,000 Canadians are engaged in the lumber business, and it is estimated that they and those dependent upon them constitute about one-ninth of the population of the Dominion. The total product of lumber in Canada in 1882 was £7,708,350 or about 35s. for each inhabitant, of which enough was sold abroad to bring into the country \$4,789,210.

DRINK AND THE INDIAN ARMY.—A great decrease has taken place of late years in the consumption of strong drinks by the European soldiers in India, and there is a corresponding spread of sobriety among the rank and file of the army there. In the year 1877-78 the total consumption of rum among British troops in India was 253,254 gallons, whereas in 1881-82 it had fallen to 149,301. Comparing the same years as regards beer-drinking the figures are, respectively 76,747 and 74,747 hogsheads. Thus it will be seen that though the consumption of rum has decreased, that of beer has not increased.

## GEMS.

THE noblest mind the best contentment has.

SEARCH others for their virtues, and thyself for thy vices.

PURPOSE is the edge and point of character; it is the superscription on the letter of talent. Character, without it, is blunt and torpid.

ALLOW a boy to run about one year in indolence, and you have laid the foundation whereon will rest his future ruin.

CHARACTER, judgment, virtue, unselfishness, mastery of one's own self—it is these that tell in the long run, far more than the most brilliant qualities.

If there be on earth one thing which is truly admirable, it is to see God's wisdom blessing an inferiority of natural powers where they have been honestly, truly, and zealously cultivated.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BALM FOR CHAPPED LIPS.—Take two spoonfuls of clarified honey, with a few drops of lavender-water, or any other perfume. Mix, and anoint the lips frequently.

HOW TO FRY POTATOES.—Boil some potatoes in their skins; when cold, peel them, cut them in slices a quarter of an inch thick, and fry them in beef-dripping a nice brown; when done, take them out with a slice to drain any grease from them, and serve piled as a pyramid on a hot dish.

OYSTER MACARONI.—Boil macaroni in a cloth to keep it straight. Put a layer in a dish seasoned with butter, salt, and pepper, then a layer of oysters; alternate until the dish is full. Mix some grated bread with a beaten egg, spread over the top, and bake.

PORK STEAKS.—Cut the pork into slices, season with Cayenne pepper, salt, and pulverized sage. Fry them a fine brown on both sides. Place a form of cranberry-sauce in the centre of the dish, and lay the slices of pork around it. Apple-sauce may be preferred to the cranberry—in which case it must be piled up in the centre of the dish.

CHICKEN PIE.—Cut the chickens in pieces as for a fricassee. Cover the bottom of the dish with a layer of veal and ham, season with parsley, pepper, and salt; add a little gravy, then place the chicken in neat order, and in each cavity put slices of hard-boiled egg. Repeat the seasoning and sauce, lay a few thin slices of ham on the top, cover the pie with puff-paste, ornament it with leaves of paste, egg the pie over with a paste-brush, and bake one hour and a half.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

WATER TEST.—A French periodical, *La Culture*, gives the following simple method for testing the purity of water. In an ordinary quart bottle three parts filled with water dissolve a spoonful of pure white sugar, cork it well, and put it in a warm place. If at the end of forty-eight hours the water becomes turbid and milky, there can be no doubt of its impurity; but if it remain limpid, it may be considered safely drinkable.

"SCOT FREE."—The phrase originated from the old word scot, or shot, meaning primarily money, but used in the sense of a reckoning. Hence to be scot free or shot free implied that a man had nothing to pay, or was clear of any contribution. Shakespeare says, "Though I should 'scape shot free in London, I fear the shot here; here's no scoring but upon the pate." Shot free also means uninjured by shot; also unpunished.

To be vain is rather a mark of humility than pride. Vain men delight in telling what honours have been done them, what great company they have kept, and the like; by which they plainly confess that these honours were more than their due and such as their friends would not believe if they had not been told. Whereas a man truly proud thinks the greatest honours below his merits, and consequently scorns to boast. We, therefore deliver as a maxim, that whoever desires the character of a proud man ought to conceal his vanity.

JILTED JAPANESE DAMSEL.—The curious hold superstition has on the mind of the Japanese is very well illustrated by the proceedings taken by a Japanese damsel when her lover proves false to his vows. When the world is at rest, at two o'clock in the morning, the girl rises. She dons a white robe and high sandals or clogs. Her coil is a metal tripod in which are thrust three lighted candles; around her neck she hangs a mirror, which falls upon her bosom; in her left hand she carries a small straw figure—effigy of her faithless lover—and in her right she grasps a hammer and nails, with which she fastens the figure to one of the sacred trees that surround the shrine. Then she prays for the death of the traitor, vowing that, if her petition be heard, she will herself pull out the nails which now offend the god by wounding the mystic tree. Night after night she comes to the shrine, and each night she strikes in two more nails, actually believing every nail will shorten her lover's life, for the god, to save this tree, will surely strike him dead.

A BOASTER.—The man who boasts has exceptional experiences in all things, according to his own account. When he went abroad he crossed the ocean in the greatest hurricane on record, and saw more icebergs than the oldest sea captain in the service. His children were all geniuses, and he found a governess for them who proved the most learned and accomplished woman in the world. Even illness does not daunt him. Our toothache is of the grinding sort, while his make him feel as though he had a musical box in his mouth. When our leg gets broken it is only an ugly fracture, but his is a compound fracture of a compound fracture. We send for a doctor to cure our ill, and he proves to be only an ordinary M.D., but when he seeks a physician he finds a man who has taken every known degree in every known science, and who cures the worst cases ever heard of. When our friend dies he will probably come back through some medium just to tell us that his death was the most wonderful death in the world, and that he found, when he got up yonder, that they had saved a choice little corner for him, where he expects to be more comfortable than anybody who has ever entered the celestial regions. If all this is mere boasting and lying, then boasting and lying are no longer gross faults, but very comforting virtues.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ANNIE R.—It is not proper for a lady to allow a gentleman, who is a mere acquaintance, to kiss her.

N. M. A.—1. To preserve autumn leaves, dip them in melted paraffin, withdrawing them quickly. 2. They will not look so well if varnished.

C. V.—1. Shakespeare is the author of the line:—

"In time we hate that which we often fear."

2. It occurs in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act I. Scene 3.

P. S. W.—Tooke's "Panttheon" was originally published referred to. 2. Saraparilla, like any other good blood purifier, may be taken in excess. Use it in moderation.

CAROLINE.—1. We have no knowledge of the diversion referred to. 2. Saraparilla, like any other good blood purifier, may be taken in excess. Use it in moderation.

UNDERSTAKER.—We have no knowledge of any certain preventive. Cases such as you describe seldom occur. An experienced physician might throw some light on the subject.

C. L.—We cannot say whether or not you were justified in laughing, without knowing the circumstances. The young gentlemen were certainly not justified in expressing his opinion about you as he did.

W. S.—Under some circumstances, for instance while studying an almanac, you might with propriety say the 1st is Sunday, but ordinarily it is better to use the future tense in speaking of future time.

F. G. M.—Swelling and redness of the eyelids may proceed from so many different causes that no remedy can be prescribed, which would be of service in every case.

F. W. G.—If it is impossible for your lover to marry you immediately, it would be the wiser course for him and lodging in another house. It is prudent to accept the opinions and prejudices of society, even when they seem unreasonable to us.

R. S. L.—To make chicken tea, cut up a fowl in small pieces; put it into an earthen vessel, with some salt and three pints of water; let it boil three hours, strain it, set it to cool six or eight hours, then take off the fat. The tea will be like a jelly.

LIZZIE.—Paste diamonds are made of glass containing a very large proportion of lead. The lead gives the glass great brilliancy, but unfortunately makes it so soft that the artificial jewels made of it soon lose their sharp edges.

ANABELLA.—Your handwriting and composition are fair. We do not see why a farmer should be judged by a lower standard than that which is applied to other men. His opportunities for self-improvement are better than those of most other hardworking men.

L. B. F.—1. We know nothing about Abou Ben Adhem except what is recorded in Leigh Hunt's beautiful little poem bearing that name. 2. Any regular bookseller will get for you a list, with prices, of all the translations of Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and Æsop's Fables now in print. You can get noble poetical translations.

R. S. T.—Under ordinary circumstances it would be much better to let a mistake in grammar pass unnoticed than to correct it in public. If a friend uses a form of expression which seems to you incorrect, you would be doing him or her a favour by drawing attention to it afterwards in private.

L. M.—Any body of men acting in a public capacity can at any time alter or amend their rules at their pleasure. They can also suspend the operation of any rule, to meet an emergency. Such a case as the one you mention should be determined on its own particular merits, with a view to the best interests of the school.

J. B. W.—The passage occurs in *As You Like It*, Act II, scene I, and reads as follows:—

"Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;  
Find'st tongue in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

C. F.—Charles Dickens was born at Landport, a suburb of Portsmouth, on the 7th February, 1812; he died at Gadshill, near Rochester, on June 9, 1870, in his fifty-eighth year, of an effusion of the brain, the result of overwork. Opinions differ as to which of his works is the best. Probably, if the questions could be put to the vote, "David Copperfield" would receive a majority.

BESS.—You are not called upon to do anything, nor is there any need for anxiety on your part. Two weeks is not a very long time, and the young man may have been kept from calling on you by various things which demanded his attention. Should he not call in a month or so, or send you some word, you would have reason to suppose that he was staying away on purpose, and then it would probably be well for you to let him stay.

M. D. J.—Grace Darling, a name famous in the annals of heroism, was the daughter of the lighthouse-keeper on Longstone, one of the Farne Islands (a group of seventeen rocky islets off the north-east coast of Northumberland), and was born on the 24th November, 1815. On the morning of September 7, 1839, a vessel called the *Forfarshire*, which, with sixty-three persons on board, had been wrecked among the Farne Islands, and was seen by the lighthouse-keeper, lying broken on the rocks. At the solicitation of his daughter, he put

off in his boat through the storm to the wreck, his only companion being the heroic Grace, who assisted him in rowing the boat. With wonderful strength and skill they managed to reach the survivors (nine in number), rescued them, and carried them safely to Longstone. Presents of every description were lavished upon the heroine by the wealthy and great of England, and her name was in every mouth throughout the kingdom. She lived but four years after this occurrence, dying of consumption, October 20, 1842.

G. H. P.—If you wish to exchange photographs with a mere acquaintance it would be better to write, asking her whether she would value your photograph enough to wish to send here in exchange. You may send your photograph without asking permission to any girl whom you consider a real friend, as in that case you may feel confident that she will be glad to have yours, and send you her own in return.

G. J. M.—Holyhead is a seaport of North Wales, situated on a small island of the same name. It is sixty-seven miles west of Liverpool. The town is irregularly built, but the houses are massively constructed of stone. A harbour of refuge has been formed by a north breakwater 7,800 feet long, and an east breakwater 2,000 feet long, the completion and formal opening of which, after twenty-five years' labour, was celebrated August 23, 1873.

## LITTLE BROWN HANDS.

Little brown hands! Ah! what under the sun  
Tells us so plainly of mischief and fun!

Always from morning to evening so busy,  
Tending the dolly, or pulling the pussy.  
Ready for dinner? Your little chair stands  
Ready as you are, dear little brown hands!

Little brown hands! As you play in the sun,  
Piling the dirt in your wagon—what fun!  
Running away with its load to be dumped,  
Tumbling and getting up, bumping and bumped.  
Making mud-pies, or at play on the sands,  
Close by the breakers, your regular brown hands!

Little brown hands! That are pulling the flowers,  
Tended by mother for hours and hours.  
What will she say when she chances to see  
Rosebuds all crumpled as these seem to be!  
Darling, that merry smile nothing withstands,  
Pluck away, pluck away, little brown hands!

Little brown hands! How at grace they are crossed.  
Grace said and over, how quick they are tossed.  
Little brown hands! That are busy all day,  
Getting so healthy and tanned at their play.  
Dearer than titles, or honours, or lands,  
Dearer than all things, dear little brown hands!

L. B. M.

R. M.—If both men fired at all the birds which rose within range, and if all the conditions of weather, ground, dogs, and birds were equal, the trial resulted in favour of the second man, because he killed with over 66 per cent. of his shots, while the first only killed with 56 per cent. of his. It is quite possible, however, that the second man was more cautious and only took comparatively easy shots, so that the test, as described by you, is insufficient to determine the relative skill of the two sportsmen.

PERCY V.—For a man of only opportunities for reading and inquiry, mythology, in the present state of the science, is one of the least profitable studies possible. The foundations of a sound science on the subject can only be said to be just laid, and no one is the better for filling the mind with the confused, silly stories gathered from the legends of many different nations, and changed according to the caprices of second-rate Greek and Latin poets, which make up the Dictionary of Mythology.

GEORGE.—1. Scattered along the coast of Ireland are 106 islands, the coast line being about 750 miles long. 2. Ireland has 90 harbours, 14 of which receive ships of any draught. There are also numerous inlets which afford a shelter to the largest fishing craft. 3. The lighthouses number 62, of which 26 are first-class. 4. The principal ports of entry are Cork, Dublin, Belfast, Waterford, Limerick, Londonderry, and Newry. 5. By far the most extensive market for Irish products is Great Britain.

LITTLE WONDER.—1. According to the "Language of Flowers," the hypoxis signifies injustice; the rose geranium, preference; apple geranium, present preference; fish geranium, disappointed expectation; nutmeg geranium, an unexpected meeting; scarlet geranium, comforting; pennyroyal, flee away. 2. Write a letter to the young gentleman, expressing your pleasure in the possession of his photograph. 3. Spelling and grammatical construction are both satisfactory, but writing will admit of improvement.

ANNIE.—The shape and size of the hands we cannot alter, but their appearance may be greatly improved by care and thoughtfulness. The first requisite is to keep them, if possible, free from dirt, and when they require washing to use none but the best soap. The water should be slightly tepid. After thoroughly cleansing them, rub them dry with a rough towel. Brisk rubbing is as good for the hands as for the body. There are a great many pastes and washes recommended to soften the skin and improve the colour of the hands, among which may be mentioned cold cream, almond

paste, honey soap, and sand soap. The last-named is a composition of soft soap, sweet oil, and finely-sifted sand, worked up to a proper consistency, and left to harden. It will be found particularly effective in removing the roughness of the skin occasioned by exposure to cold winds. Chapped hands are generally caused by neglecting to rinse off the soap before drying them. If care be taken to rub them until they are soft and shining, the hands will scarcely ever chape, especially if a drop of honey be rubbed over them after they become dry. It will be serviceable to apply a little cold cream, or spermaceti ointment, in cold weather, before retiring to rest. To keep the hands cool, bathe them occasionally in alum water. To keep them dry for any delicate work, rub over them a little club moss in very fine powder.

D. W. P.—There is very good reason to believe Egypt was the first country in which the art of medicine was cultivated with any degree of success, the office of the priest and the physician being probably combined in the same person. In the writings of Moses there are various allusions to the practice of medicine among the Jews, especially with reference to the treatment of leprosy. The priests were the physicians, and their treatment mainly aimed at promoting cleanliness and preventing contagion.

BRIAN.—A civil engineer should have a good mathematical education; he should know something of the methods by which the rules governing the strength of materials have been determined, as well as the rules themselves; he must be something of a draftsman, and, above all, he must have a practical knowledge of the use of instruments. It is true that a man may do very useful work with only the last two qualifications, but in most cases he will be passed in a few years by a better educated competitor. Of course, good health and a fair amount of bodily strength are of great advantage to a surveyor, but not much more so than to a member of any other profession.

FRED F.—Of course, if there was an implied agreement, you would be bound by it, and it would be well for you to ask yourself to what you consider yourself bound by the young lady's accepting your attentions. If you are not bound, of course she is not, because an implied agreement that does not bind both parties is no agreement at all. Such a matter would and should be governed by the circumstances of the case. If the young lady likes you she can continue to accept your attentions; but if she has found out that she does not, and in all probability never will like you, then she would be at liberty to decline your attentions at any time she should choose to do so. And you would have the right to cease paying her attention on the same terms.

J. B. W.—Tennis is a game of great antiquity, being taken from a similar game played by the Greeks and Romans. Under the name of paume (given to it from the ball being at that time struck with the palm of the hand), it is noticed in the earlier records of King Arthur. It was very popular during the fifteenth century among the French, and about this time the use of a heavy glove to protect the hand in striking the ball was introduced, and a further improvement was subsequently made by the adoption of the racket. Many modifications have been introduced, but the legitimate descendant of the paume and tennis of former days is the present game of racket, which is played in an almost identical manner. The modern game of lawn-tennis is a greatly modified form of that described above.

SELIMA F.—The art of making wax fruit and flowers is said to be easily acquired, though, of course, perfection in modelling and colouring can be gained only in close study. In modelling fruit in wax, it is usual to take a mould of the object to be imitated in plaster of Paris, or in a flexible composition of beeswax, Burgundy pitch, and Venice turpentine. Wax is then made in quantity of olive oil. Wax for making flowers is bleached and prepared in thin sheets of various colours, which are cut into shapes for leaves, petals, &c., according to the flowers to be imitated. It would be better to buy such articles as are needed rather than to attempt making those of an inferior grade. The application of colours to wax flowers is on the same principle as that of water-colour painting.

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